

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012–2013

1



Overview of the Year for Second-Grade Writers

September/October	Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors
October/November	Unit Two – Writing and Revising Realistic Fiction
November/December	Unit Three – Informational Writing
January/February	Unit Four – Writing About Reading
February/March	Unit Five – Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages
March/April	Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well
May/June	Unit Seven – Informational Writing About Science

This curricular plan stands on the shoulders of three decades of not only research in the teaching of writing, but of actual classroom instruction and practice. This plan represents the best knowledge of a field of study that has become known as the “writing process approach to teaching writing.” Based on the principle that the scientific method underlies all that scientists do, so, too, there is a process that underlies all that writers do. Whether a scientist is engaged in physics, chemistry, or floating and sinking work at the water table, the scientist will engage in the scientific method. Similarly, whether a writer is working on a persuasive review or a poem, the writer will engage in the writing process. The approach highlights the importance of direct and explicit instruction in the skills and strategies of proficient writing, of students engaging in frequent goal-driven practice which benefits from regular assessment-based feedback, and of close study of grade-level complex mentor texts.

This document outlines a suggested curriculum for teaching writing in second grade. The curriculum provides students with an instructional pathway designed to improve their skills in the three genres of writing that are spotlighted in the Common Core State Standards: narrative, opinion, and information writing. Across the year, students will work in each of these kinds of writing with increasing sophistication and with decreasing reliance on scaffolds. For example, early in second grade, students will write informational books based on personal expertise. Later in the year, they will revisit informational books writing within a content area, employing more sophisticated text structures.

As students are writing across genres they will have opportunities to demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, capitalization, punctuation and spelling when

Overview of the Second Grade Writing Curricular Calendar

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012–2013

2

writing. According to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), students should use grammatical structures such as adjectives, verbs, conjunctions and prepositions, as well as capitalization and punctuation skills. The CCSS also spotlight foundational skills in spelling that should be in place by the end of the year. To this end, then, you will teach students how to edit for capitalization, punctuation, grammar and spelling, both as they write and before publishing.

Although this document spotlights second grade, it is important to know that it is part of a K-8 spiral curriculum in writing. The curriculum detailed here assumes that your students participated in a writing workshop during kindergarten and first grade. Expect that if your students have been in writing workshops during first grade, most of them will begin second grade able to actually write—pen going down the page—for forty minutes a day, and most will work across five-page booklets, writing something like five to seven sentences on each page, completing several of these booklets each week, unless they are engaged in comparable amounts of revision. Remember that early next year, when your children enter third grade, they will generally be expected to write about one notebook page of writing during one day’s writing workshop, and another full page of writing at home each night. Of course, just as your children will be reading books that differ in complexity level, so, too, the paper on which they write will differ. You’ll want to remember that the paper choices (like the book levels) need to change as the year unfolds. Be prepared to move children toward more challenging paper choices as soon as they are ready, giving them more lines on a page, smaller spaces between lines, and only small boxes for quick sketches. Make sure that the number of sentences your students write grows steadily and dramatically—which means that during writing workshop, children need to spend the lion’s share of time actually writing!

Because children will enter second grade with a lot of knowledge about how to carry on as writers, it is important that they work with enormous independence and initiative. At the end of every day’s minilesson, when you send them off to work on their writing, you will want to remind them of the full array of lessons they have been learning, of work they could be doing right away that day. The minilesson will have added one new strategy. Send the children off to draw from that full repertoire.

Early in the year, one of the first goals of your teaching will be to remind students to bring all they already learned about writing from previous years to the work they are now doing. You’ll use rubrics that are embedded in the first curriculum as a way to remind children of what they already know how to do—and as a way for you to quickly notice when you’ll need to revisit the instruction they received earlier so their foundation for the work ahead is strong. Because the units of study are designed to build on one another, a teacher at any one grade level can always use the write-ups for preceding and following grades to develop some knowledge of ways to support writers who especially struggle and those who need enrichment. This sometimes takes a little research since the units do not always match up in each grade. It is critical that you modify this plan so that your teaching takes into account the data from your students.

This one document overviews a year-long curriculum for second grade writers. This curriculum is further detailed in a series of books that will be released in 2013. That series, *Units of Study for Second Grade Writers*, will include five Units-of-Study books, each containing the

Overview of the Second Grade Writing Curricular Calendar

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012–2013

3

minilessons, small-group work, conferring, and teacher- and child-facing rubrics that undergird a year-long curriculum in teaching writing to second graders. This document is also grounded in the teaching of the DVD, *Big Lessons from Small Writers*, which contains twenty-two videos that illustrate this curriculum (www.unitsofstudy.com). Of course, we expect you to alter these units based on all you know about your children and based on your own interests and passions. We would never imagine that any teacher would use any resource blindly; instead, please add and subtract according to what works for you and your students.

For those of you who worked with the TCRWP's curricular plans from 2011–2012, we have made some important changes. First, we've included fewer units in all, allowing for more time for you to conduct a pre-assessment formative assessment, and a summative assessment within each unit. We have also provided rubrics that can help you track students' progress in the three genres that the CCSS spotlight. Throughout the plans, there are many opportunities for students to engage in close study of the grade-level complex texts that function as mentor texts for a given unit of study. Enormous attention has been paid to ensuring that students have opportunities to engage in work of high-level cognitive demand. They are continually asked to transfer what they learn while working in one text or one genre to another text, another genre. Students engage in inquiries, evaluating mentor texts, their own writing, and writing by peers. They also set goals for themselves and receive assistance in working with resolve towards those.

Second-grade teachers have some special challenges in the teaching of writing. Howard Gardner describes second grade as “the age of competence,” suggesting that during the next three years, children need to develop the competence and the confidence to weather the self-critical, self-consciousness of the upcoming years. Of course, in many school systems, standardized tests rain down on children even when they are in third grade—so second grade is often the last reprieve for kids. It's a window of time in which children can grow in leaps and bounds.

Notice how the minilessons following Unit One issue a wide-open invitation for youngsters to make decisions about the work they'll be doing on any given day—four kids might be starting a new piece of writing, while another half-dozen are using all the revision strategies they've been taught during previous years (or during a quick minilesson reminding them of those options) to revise up a storm. Try to maintain this spirit as the year unfolds.

As part of this, you'll want to be sure that your conferring is responsive to your students' different needs, which means that most of your conferring will not match the day's minilesson but will instead help writers self-assess, generate purposes, draw on strategies they think might work, and work with ambitiousness and resourcefulness. When you allow your children to take ownership of the choices they make as they write, you are following the essential principles and beliefs that inform writing workshops.

We continue to recommend that you teach three units on narrative writing, all aimed toward lifting the level of writing. The first two (personal narrative and fiction) come early in the year, and the second (adaptations of fairy tales), comes in the spring. Before the winter holiday you will have time for an extended unit on nonfiction informational writing, aligned to a unit on nonfiction reading. This was created to be a longer unit in recognition of the Common Core State

Overview of the Second Grade Writing Curricular Calendar

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012–2013

4

Standards’ increasing emphasis on informational writing and academic literacy. You will see that the writing curricular calendar sometimes matches the reading curricular calendar—for example, we imagine that students are reading fairy tales and folk tales as they also write them.

In January and February, we recommend focusing on opinion writing, teaching children to write persuasively through a unit on writing about reading. This is a perfect ramp up to the essays they’ll write in third grade. The February/March unit is a study of poetry in all its glorious forms. We recognize that some of you might make the choice to move poetry to April to coincide with National Poetry Month, as some did during the 2011–2012 year. In many states, including New York State, poetry is not only part of the Common Core Standards but it is also part of the third-grade high-stakes tests. We therefore positioned the unit so that it would be fresh on your students’ minds as they enter third grade. Then in March/April, you will teach a unit in writing fairy tales. Finally, the year wraps up with a return to informational writing, with a focus on a specific content area. We believe this is a great way to revitalize the end of the year and to send children off to summer vacation with extra energy.

Assessment

We recognize that second graders are an especially diverse group—some of your students will still be fledgling writers, while others will be ready for anything you put before them. Your teaching will need to be assessment-based and designed to support the diverse range of writers in your care. We encourage you to skim the documents written for first and third graders because those will help you understand ways you can support both your struggling and your strongest writers. And, of course, remember that these units are provided as suggestions for you and your colleagues. We would never imagine that any of you would use these or any other resources blindly. Add to this and subtract from it as you construct teaching that is aligned with your local and state standards, that responds to your students, and that captures your imagination, represents your values, and helps you bring your best ideas about education to your students.

In your eagerness to get started, don’t bypass the opportunity to collect baseline data. At the very beginning of the year, and prior to beginning any unit, we encourage you to conduct on-demand assessments of students’ abilities to write in the three genres that the Common Core Spotlights—narrative, opinion and information—and use this data as a way to plan your instruction. Say to students: “You are each going to write a true story of one time in your lives that you remember—this piece should show your best work and will go on our bulletin board for people to admire. You can work on it today and you’ll have more time tomorrow. Here’s what you’ll write about: *There are often people in our lives who are really important to us. Write about one moment you spent with a person who really matters to you. Tell the story of that moment.*” Devote one writing period to this initial assessment, giving children forty-five minutes of actual writing time. Be sure kids have five-page booklets on which to write and approximately three to four lines on each page. This performance assessment will allow you to plan your next teaching moves accordingly, and you will also have a baseline against which to compare the work students are able to do in informational writing across the year.

We suggest you give similar prompts to launch children’s on-demand work in the other genres (the exact wording is available on our website). Then allow students to write, on their own, doing

Overview of the Second Grade Writing Curricular Calendar

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012–2013

5

the best work that they can do. If you hesitate to assess all three genres at the start of the year, then assess each genre just prior to launching instruction in it, using this as your pre-assessment (and later, as your summative assessment) for that unit. Take a look at our website (www.readingandwritingproject.com) for more on performance assessments and how to administer them.

We can't stress enough how important it is that students do their own work, unscaffolded by you, during the assessment. Resist the urge to prompt, coach and teach into these pieces. Do not remind children of the characteristics of effective narratives, opinion writing or information texts, do not confer with kids, and do not give any spelling tips. The point is to see what the students can do on their own so you can build your unit around what they do and do not already know about writing in each particular genre. Take note of what your students are bringing with them from first grade. Do they grasp the concept of writing narratives that are sequential? How do they elaborate their writing? In terms of conventions, do they control capitalization and ending punctuation? Do they appear to care not only about what they write, but also about how?

You'll not only use these pieces to inform your teaching plans but to give both your students and their parents a peek into children's growth over the year. Propping them up now, then, will serve a dual purpose. You also want to see how children do with independence. Be sure they have booklets that contain plenty of pages (at least five) and plenty of lines on each page (perhaps eight). Be sure children also know they can add more pages if they need additional space.

Once you have collected students' on-demand work, use teacher-facing rubrics (the continua) and exemplar pieces to ascertain the level of work that students are doing early in their studies, and then to track their progress across the year. The continua for assessing narrative, information and opinion writing are available on our website at www.readingandwritingproject.com.

These three continua are closely aligned to the Common Core State Standards, with twelve levels for grades K-8, and language designed to support teachers in assessing writing skill development and creating teaching points. The continua will be invaluable when assessing your students' on-demands. We suggest you sit with your grade team to assess student work. This process will ensure that all teachers on the grade are consistent (or relatively so) in how they assess writing. After giving the narrative demand for example, each teacher will want to find student work that exemplifies each level (one piece for Level 1, one for Level 2, etc). Many of your second graders who left first grade at benchmark will be at a Level 1.

You needn't match every single trait—just look between the piece and the touchstone texts at each level and do your best to locate the child's on-demand writing within the range of sample pieces. Then look ahead on the continuum to see the work you'll teach writers over the next few months, and note specific techniques that your writers are probably already doing that you can complement (and teach). The Common Core State Standards suggest that by the end of second grade your children should be doing the work that is represented on all three continua as Level 2 writing work. You will want to keep this in mind as you plan for your teaching across the year.

Overview of the Second Grade Writing Curricular Calendar

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012–2013

6

Then after two months of work in narrative writing you'll re-administer this assessment, saying exactly the same things and providing the same conditions, and then you'll watch to see how much your children have grown in that time using the TCRWP *Narrative Writing Continuum*. You will want to make sure that you do the same kind of assessment to see what your students need in informational writing before you begin the units focused on nonfiction. Bring the September, October, and November pieces to your parent-teacher conferences and use these to discuss children's growth. Noting each child's growth, comparing what he or she can do on the run and without assistance both now and after a bit of time, will help remind you that your teaching always looks toward tomorrow and toward independence.

We also encourage you to assess students' growing control of spelling and recommend administering Donald Bear's Developmental Spelling Inventory detailed in *Words Their Way*. You'll give your whole class what amounts to a spelling test, asking them to spell each of twenty-five words. To assess your spellers, you will need to count not the words but the features that are correct. This information will not only help you decide what to teach in your phonics/word study time; it will also give you valuable information about how to help your first graders with spelling during writing workshop. Then you will be able to channel your whole-class spelling instruction so that your instruction is aligned to the main needs you see across your class and also differentiated for your struggling and strongest spellers. Over the course of the year, in four units of study, we have outlined key spelling features to work on with your students to help align your word study work with writer's workshop. Of course, if your students enter well above or below grade level, you may want to adjust which features you teach to better respond to your students' need. The foundational skills' section in the Common Core will also help you align your concepts about print, spelling, and phonics work so as to build a coherent word study program in your school. In writing workshop your students will have ample time to learn and practice these skills as well as those presented in the language standards.

You will also want to assess your writers' command over the mechanics and conventions for writing. Use the lens of the language standards in the Common Core to help you understand which conventions of written language your children use with automaticity when they write. To understand this, look at their on-demand pieces of writing. For second graders, ask yourself questions such as, 'Which children write with ending punctuation?' and 'Which children understand when to capitalize a word and when not to?' This will determine where you start when teaching conventions to your whole class and what work you will save for small groups.

Don't lure kids to revise a piece of writing so completely and so extensively that you end up scaffolding them to do work that is far beyond what they will be able to soon do on their own. Exercise caution, too, while assessing any developmental continuum. If you bypass listening and responding to a writer, using a continuum rather than the writer's intentions as the sole source of your instruction, then the tool will have made your teaching worse, not better. Children benefit most from instruction when it helps them become more powerful as they work on projects they care about, rather than studying mechanics in isolation. You should see your children's knowledge about conventions grow in leaps and bounds this year.

Overview of the Second Grade Writing Curricular Calendar

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012–2013

7

Special Words of Advice

We have three suggestions for how to lift the level of your writing workshops in the year ahead. First, when your children come into second grade they may seem young, but it is important for you to acknowledge the fact that many of them have come from kindergarten and first grade classrooms in which they have learned to write books that span multiple pages. They have studied and implemented mentor author techniques in their writing, written poems and how-to books and all-about books and stories, and then finished the year with folders bursting with information books. When they were in first grade they probably wrote at least three or four texts a week. Your second graders will certainly write two to three texts a week. The more mature writers will write two a week, and those texts will have paragraphs, not just sentences, on each page. Remember, the younger children are, the more texts they'll tend to write! Make sure your students begin this year by writing in three- or four-page booklets. Additionally, students will have already learned many revision techniques so they do not need to wait before beginning to make significant revisions to their drafts. Certainly you will want to supply each table with a supply of single sheets so students can add more pages to their books.

Secondly, it is important that children have opportunities to do work that has a high cognitive demand. You can introduce a new kind of text—say, a poem—by saying to students, “Will you study this text and notice the ways in which it is different from the narratives you were just writing? Think about what you will need to do to write a poem like this one.” Then you can send students off to show what they can do. If many kids produce work that suggests they were not successful at independently analyzing the new kind of writing, don't fret. Just follow the invitation to engage in an inquiry with more explicit and supported instruction. Then give children opportunities to evaluate their own writing and to draw from a repertoire of possible techniques the ones most suited to their needs. As children self-assess their work, they can note ways in which it does and does not meet the criteria. Then invite them to set goals for themselves. In your minilessons, remind writers of all the options they have to draw upon during any one day's writing workshop. Don't expect that the work children will do on any one day will be that day's teaching point, and nothing more! If you taught writers that characters can actually talk, and that writers might add quotes or speech bubbles, you should expect children to write up a storm, using details and adding feelings, and incorporating anything else they have already learned, in addition to making characters talk. During conferences, ask students to show you what they already know and can do. For example, if you confer to teach a particular writer to show, not tell, instead of simply plunging into that instruction, you may first say to the writer, “If I were to suggest that you show not tell on this page of your book, can you tell me how you would do that?” Then you can respond to what that student demonstrates she can already do, noting ways in which her work was effective and ways she could take it further. As you confer, much of the instruction will come in response to the data that is before you. If you sense that instead, you are moving among students, spoon-feeding them a bite-sized version of that day's minilesson, step back and reexamine your instruction. Make sure that at least half of your conferences arise in response to your study of student work, and that when you do study student work, you look at the extent to which students are drawing on all that you have taught over the course of the year and not just on the instruction of that day.

Overview of the Second Grade Writing Curricular Calendar

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012–2013

8

Thirdly, when planning your units of study, we suggest you draw on the writing pieces that you receive from last year's first grade teacher. This way, the work you do in second grade won't repeat first grade work, but will instead build upon it. Your instruction across the day should remind students that they have now graduated and are ready to rise to the challenges of second graders.

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

September/October

Second grade is a special year in children’s writing lives. With two years of writing workshop under their belt, not only are students able to carry on with greater independence, but their increasing phonemic awareness and growing repertoire of writing skills and strategies means that they are also coming closer to capturing on the page stories that flow so effortlessly from their minds and mouths. Second graders are ready to tackle new challenges, to write with greater intent and meaning. Launching the year with a mentor authors unit is a way to say to them, “You’re grown up writers now, ready to write like the best of the best.”

This unit draws largely on the forthcoming *2nd Grade Writing* launching book (Heinemann, 2013), a rewrite of the original *K-2 Authors as Mentors* (Heinemann, 2003). It is also designed to prepare children to meet the rigorous demands of the Common Core State Standards and Norman Webb’s Depth of Knowledge. The unit sets children up to study the ways in which a couple master writers use craft to effect meaning. Rather than spotlighting particular craft moves in isolation, the unit suggests that authors consider the response they hope readers will have to their texts, and then make deliberate moves to bring about that response. Children will study how a couple mentor authors do this and will then study authors of their choice, meanwhile working to emulate these moves in their own narratives.

This may sound like sophisticated work for second graders, but it is, in fact, aligned with the expectations of the Common Core State Standards. An examination of the student work included in the Appendix of the CCSS shows that the level of proficiency required for narrative writing is especially high. According to the Standards, second graders should “recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, and provide a sense of closure.” In fact, this little list of expectations doesn’t come close to conveying what the pieces of writing in the Appendix convey.

A second grade example narrative text looks like this:

My first tooth is gone

I recall one winter night. I was four. My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend. It was my sister and I had run right into each other. Boy! did we cry. But not only did I cry, my tooth was bleeding. Then it felt funny. Then plop! There it was lying in my hand. So that night I put it under my pillow and in the morning I found something. It was not my tooth it was two dollars. So I ran down the hall, like I wasen’t supposed to, and showed my mom and dad. They were suprised because when they lost teeth the only thing they got is 50¢.

In addition to writing a sequential account with detailed actions and reactions, this young author has written with voice and mood. There is a sense that this child knows something about the rhythm of writing—and how to create a particular effect, in this case building tension and excitement. If we are to help our students write similarly, we must teach them not only the basic elements of story writing, but also how to put stories onto the page in ways that the writing “sings.” Of course, you won’t expect that children will leave this unit writing perfectly crafted pieces. Rather, you’ll teach your youngsters to begin to notice how published authors use craft, and will then welcome their own approximations, knowing this unit’s instruction is merely planting a seed.

Of course, students cannot create even rough approximations of well crafted writing without a great deal of instruction and practice. In this unit, then, children will write narratives, selecting small moments from their lives and then writing those across the pages of booklets. Since the writers in your rooms have already experienced this type of writing in past years, you will want to continue to emphasize the repertoire of work that they know. Children come to second grade with a backpack of tools for writing narratives, and Small Moments in particular, and this is their time to carry these tools forward, using them to craft stories that readers are eager to read. The year before, the emphasis was on bringing characters to life by making them move and talk, and by telling what characters think and feel. As first graders, your students will have had a brief introduction to simple craft moves, such as using ellipses and big bold words to build excitement, or including “sound words” to animate the scene. In this unit, they’ll add to this repertoire, learning multiple ways that authors create suspense or mood, or create a beautiful image, or spotlight a strong feeling. Building on the work students did in first grade, this unit will help children learn to ‘orient’ a reader by establishing a clear setting, situation, and point of tension. Your job will be to challenge your second grade writers to create the types of narratives that read like real literature, stories that published authors themselves would craft. To do this work, children will study the craft of a few exemplar authors and incorporate these craft moves into their own writing.

We’ve designed this unit with the assumption that your students enter second grade having already experienced the units that are described in our first grade curricular calendars and in *Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades K-2* (Heinemann 2003). If your students do not bring that background with them, then we recommend you rely upon the first grade curricular calendar for the first unit, and on the book *Launching the Writing Workshop* from *Units of Study*, which provide minilessons and conferring support for that unit.

In this first unit of study, you’ll strive towards independence and towards dramatic growth in the level of your students’ writing, leading them (and you) to leave this one unit expecting that their writing will continue to improve in obvious, dramatic ways as each new unit unfolds. These two goals are utterly interrelated because essentially, you need to organize a writing workshop within which students work with great investment towards clear goals and within clear structures. That will allow students to hum along, drawing on their growing repertoire of strategies, working with independence. Both the Common Core State Standards and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge call for students to work with progressive independence and increasing levels of cognitive demand.

One of the most important messages we give to children during a writing workshop is this: “You are writers, like writers the world over.” It makes sense, then, that we invite children to look closely at the work of a couple published writers and then let those writers function as mentors. Once children have looked closely at a text, or at several texts, written by these authors, noticing each author’s craftsmanship, they can turn toward their own writing, reflecting on their own craftsmanship, thinking, “Perhaps I could try this in my piece.” One goal for this unit, then, is that children embark on a life of observation and application of craft to their own work, lifting the quality of their writing by doing so. Imagine that your children will write half a dozen booklets, each with five pages and approximately one paragraph per page, during this unit. From the start they will write Small Moments under the influence of a few authors and then, as the unit progresses, they will revise pieces, as authors do, using all the craft moves they have learned from start to finish.

A word of caution: At its core, this unit is about strengthening narrative craft. It is not a unit for writers to craft adaptations of an author's book. If Kevin Henkes is one of your selected mentor authors, your writers will not create eight to ten versions of “Malik Worried” stories where they themselves worry and worry themselves into a tither, only to find a best friend with similar issues and find a place in the world. Rather, your writers will walk away from the unit with the ability to write dialogue and small actions that reveal a character’s inner beauty by carefully choosing and crafting words and phrases that belong to that character. As your writers dive into the rich work of Small Moment writing, then, you will want to be sure to rally them around studying how each of the mentor pieces was written. This work will be especially critical at the start as children generate story ideas and begin writing their booklets.

Assessment

The TCRWP has many reasons for starting the year with an emphasis on personal narrative, one of which is that the Common Core State Standards, now adopted by forty-eight states, supports this move. The Standards require that students develop some proficiency at writing three kinds of texts: opinion writing, informational writing, and narrative texts.

As you consider how to assess your second grade writers across the year, then, you have some choices to make. You may decide to maximize your assessment of growth across all three writing genres that children will learn, from the very start of the year to the very end, in which case we suggest giving students initial writing assessments in narrative, informational and opinion writing, and then summative assessments in all three again at the end of the year. If this feels like too much to tackle along with everything else you are doing to launch the year, you may instead opt to give an initial assessment in just narrative writing, and to hold off on administering initial assessments in the other two genres until November and January.

At the very least you will administer the narrative writing assessment so that you can see both where the majority of your class falls in narrative writing skills, and where the outliers fall. Most likely, many of your students will be at a Level 1, which sets them up to work toward Level 2 on the TCRWP *Narrative Writing Continuum* (www.readingandwritingproject.com) by the end of second grade to align to the expectations that the Common Core State Standards set forth. Of course this is the beginning of the year, but using this tool to assess what your students are already able to do will help you plan what you need to teach.

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

As you plan your assessment(s), consider the guidelines laid out by the Common Core State Standards for narrative writing, and speaking and listening. You can expect most entering second graders to “write narratives in which they recount a well elaborated event or short sequence of events” (W 2.3) and by the year’s end, that second graders will not only narrate well elaborated sequential events, but also “include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings” and “use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure” (W 2.3). Then, too, the Standards expect second graders to “participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts” (SL 2.1), in which they “build on others’ talk...by linking their comments to the remarks of others” (SL 2.1b), and that they can “tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details” (SL 2.4). That is, there is an expectation that second graders will notice connections between their thinking and their peers’, and that they will speak with increasing attention to detail. Of course, you will want to assess not only what your children can do on day one and as they leave your room, but how they progress across the year. That is, you will want to have a sense of how each child learns, of how he or she moves across a variety of skill sets, acquiring increased proficiency in writing, speaking and listening.

For the initial narrative assessment, give your children a three-page booklet and ask them to write a story about something they have done. Then collect these pieces in order to see what children produce, using the *Narrative Writing Continuum* to determine a starting level for each child. This will inform what you teach in terms of structure, elaboration, craft, cohesion, and meaning. While you can expect that not all students will progress at the same rate, you will hold in mind certain year-end grade goals. Your goal is that by the end of this year, students will be able to craft focused, small moment narratives that depict several linked scenes and are elaborated with some dialogue, thoughts, and feelings. Second graders should demonstrate an increasing use of craft moves and detail—sometimes at the cost of clarity. Expect that they’ll introduce their stories with an initiating action, establish a setting, and end their pieces with a sense of closure. Meanwhile, their writing should display a growing understanding of grammar conventions. As you review the narrative writing assessments your children submit, and consider your instruction for this first unit, keep an eye on these year-long goals. Refer to the Spelling section at the end of this unit for more information about spelling assessment and instruction as well as editing work.

The narrative writing assessment will also determine the types of paper you give your students. You will later want to compare what your kids produce for this initial assessment with what they are able to do at the end of the unit, as well as throughout the year. Periodically, you will of course also give students formative assessments, relying on conferences and small group work to assess that they are on track, and to teach into the things students are not yet grasping in order to support their progress. We also suggest you create student-facing rubrics so that children can assess themselves, noticing what they are and aren’t yet doing, and making goals in accordance with their observations.

The Teacher’s College Reading and Writing Project has also developed a Writing Process rubric which will aid in assessing children’s understanding and usage of the different stages of the writing process. The Writing Process rubric is a road map that lets you know where your children are headed. In September of second grade, expect that your students can generate ideas

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

by recalling a topic or event, and can quickly plan a story by sketching or jotting the event(s). When they draft, children will be able to write three to five pages each day—that is, approximately twelve sentences. They should be able to complete a new piece in one to two days. They can also revisit their pieces in order to revise parts and fix up ending punctuation.

Although you will not conduct running records or any of the more formal reading assessments at the start of this unit, you will of course need to be aware of what children can do as readers of literature during this unit, as reading comprehension and analysis are central to an author study unit. Children will not just be mentoring themselves to mentor *authors*, but also to mentor *texts*. In order to write like their mentors, they will be closely studying their mentors' texts, looking at these to understand sophisticated craft moves that make these books so powerful. This means that in addition to meeting many of the writing standards of the Common Core, your second graders will also need to work toward some of the reading standards. Certainly, they will need to meet the Key Ideas and Details standards (RL 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3), and in particular, they will need to meet the Craft and Structure standards. They will need to “describe how words and phrases...supply rhythm and meaning in a story...” (RL2.4) and “describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action (RL2.5).

Bend One – Writers Live Writerly Lives, Drawing On What They Already Know and on Inspiration from Published Authors to Write Up a Storm

Before you decide upon the mentor authors your class will study, consider the kind of texts you imagine your children writing this unit. Because this unit is first in the year and sets the stage for the upcoming unit on fiction, we suggest you choose mentor authors whose books are models of well-crafted, effective, focused narratives.

Some mentor texts and authors that are particularly well suited to second graders are *The Leaving Morning* and *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Angela Johnson), *The Snowy Day* and *Pet Show!* (Ezra Jack Keats), and *Short Cut* (Donald Crews). Other, somewhat more sophisticated texts include *Owl Moon* (Jane Yolen), *My Father's Hands* (Joanne Ryder), *I Love My Hair* and *Bippity Bop Barbershop* (Natasha Anastasia Tarpley). In the revised mentor author unit of study book, we chose to feature one slightly more challenging text that is particularly rich in craft (Jane Yolen's *Owl Moon*), and a second, somewhat simpler text, which is an old favorite (Angela Johnson's *The Leaving Morning*). Our hope was that these two texts would allow children to latch onto writing that feels replicable and simultaneously craft moves that present a good challenge. If you have a class full of strugglers, Kevin Henkes' books (*Sheila Rae the Brave*, *Wemberly Worried*, and *Sheila Rae's Peppermint Stick*) are especially accessible reads, and second graders will enjoy their humor.

Once you have selected a couple mentor authors and texts, you will want to introduce them with some fanfare, reading aloud the opening lines of each book, doing everything you can to make the read-alouds magical. If your children are as taken by these beginnings as you are, they may feel as if they are part of the process of deciding to take on a special relationship with these authors, these texts. To that end, you will invite children to live like these writers. Even if you do not know much about the life of the particular mentor author you have chosen, you can convey to children that this author almost certainly lived differently because he or she was a writer. This

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

person probably paid close attention to the details of life, recognizing those details as potential grist for the writing mill!

Tell students that they are going to learn not just from any ol' authors this year, but from some of the very best writers—that they will be mentoring themselves to these writers, studying what these authors do so that they can deepen their own writing. You'll suggest that published authors live "writerly lives" and will set your second graders up to establish their own such lives, finding and recording moments of inspiration in tiny topics notepads, reading closely to study and understand the purpose of various craft moves, and aiming to write pieces that sound like literature—ones that draw readers in.

On the first day, you'll rally youngsters to choose topics and write small moments in booklets, just as they've done the two years prior. You'll suggest ways that the mentor authors may have come up with their ideas, and will emphasize that to write like them, students will want to do likewise, finding not just any moments from their lives to write about, but especially powerful ones. Then you'll help them imagine how a mentor author came up with his or her idea for the text you are studying, and suggest that children can be inspired—and inspirational—in similar ways.

In both the original and forthcoming *Authors as Mentors* books, we suggest that youngsters carry tiny notepads with them, jotting or sketching the little things that happen, in order to live writerly lives. If you decide to follow this suggestion, we recommend you purchase the smallest notebooks you can find and then scissor them into thirds so that these notepads are truly tiny—so that children write not life stories, but small moment stories. You might then introduce them on the second day of the unit, saying to your children something like, "I bet Angela Johnson got the idea for her story, *The Leaving Morning*, from one day when her family had to move. She must have thought to herself, 'I need to remember this moment,' and then jotted or sketched it in a notepad." Obviously you won't know how the mentor author you select got an idea, but you will use your imagination and the notion of a tiny topic notepad as a way to steer your young writers toward assuming writerly lives.

You will want to carry your own Tiny Topics notepad, and make a rather public show of how you take it out to record the small moments that happened to you. "Oh my goodness!" you might say, "I slipped on the ice and Audra kept me from falling. Soon Audra and I were skating on that ice! That would make a great story! Let me jot just the words 'slipping on ice—Audra helped' in my Tiny Topics notepad to hold onto that idea."

Of course, collecting ideas in a notepad will happen mostly outside of school, although writers could also take five minutes of the writing workshop to collect ideas for stories. But within ten minutes of the writing workshop's start, you'll probably need to give a mid-workshop teaching point to remind writers that once writers have collected a few story ideas, they read their notes in order to select small stories that they think would make others laugh, or wince, or catch their breath, or lean in close to hear more. Then they take this idea and plan the story. This, of course, takes just another five minutes or so—don't imagine children spending a whole day planning a story! Remind children of the planning strategies they already know: telling stories across their fingers, or sketching them across pages. After reminding them of this, you might say, "Writers

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

think, ‘Which strategy will I use today?’ Then quickly rehearse your piece. I see that many of you are also drawing pictures on each page to help you plan and remember what you want to write. Today I want to teach you that after you’ve rehearsed your piece, after you know what you’ll say, then your sketches on each page can be really *quick*—just enough to help you remember what you want to say so that you can get started on your writing right away!" This way, not only do you remind children that they can draw from a repertoire of strategies (DOK Level 3 work), you also focus on another important way to lift the level of second grade work, which is to devote less time to drawing and more time to writing.

After planning, children will write a story in full. All of this will happen within the first day of the unit, keeping the pace of starting, and sometimes finishing stories, in one or two days. Encourage your writers to revise on the go; when they finish one book, they should pause to reread and think carefully, “Is this how I want this part to go?” or “Could I add something more here?” You will certainly want to teach a minilesson or two on rereading writing for sense, during which you focus on punctuation and spelling, capitalization, and so forth.

Stamina is especially essential this year. One secret to stamina lies in the paper that you give your children. You will almost certainly want to start the year by providing kids with five- or six-page booklets—not single pages—with each page containing just a small box for the picture and plenty of lines—perhaps eight—for the writing. Remember, students have been writing in booklets since kindergarten, so they will expect this! It is impossible to overemphasize the power that the paper itself has for conveying expectations. Therefore, you will also want to have varied paper choices to match students’ volume goals. Within this one unit, you should expect that second graders will write approximately eight five-page long books. That is a very rough estimate and certainly many children can do much more than this, but don’t expect that second graders will write a page a day, or a book a month!

From the moment your students enter your room, you will want them to draw on all that they know as writers, and to draw on these routines and repertoires during workshop time. This first bend then, is a place to empower your students to get started independently bringing all that they have learned from kindergarten and first grade to their second grade writing workshop. You will want to build on the fact that your writers will feel more grown up as second graders, while still using this first week of school as a time to initiate the structures and routines that underlie any effective workshop. You might say on Day One, “Do you remember the first time you ever came to this school and you weren’t sure where to go, or what to do? Well as we start our second grade writing workshop, I have HUGE news to tell you. *You already know what to do.* And you don’t have to sit there and ask, ‘What do I do?’ You can get started on writing, just like you can figure out how to get off the bus, go to the playground, line up, come into our room...” This is largely true. Your students have two years of writing workshop behind them, and *will* recall many of the routines.

Of course, this doesn’t mean they won’t need reminders. In the body of your first few minilessons, be sure to tuck in comments such as, “You already know how to convene in the meeting area,” or “You already know how to line up at the door” and then quickly review your expectations, perhaps acting out the transition from the meeting area to work spaces. You could demonstrate how to push in your chair, go swiftly to the meeting area, sit cross-legged on top of

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

your writing folder in your assigned rug spot, and reread the charts that hang near the meeting area. That is, you'll convey to youngsters, "You already know how to..." and then proceed to review what you assume children already know.

Over subsequent workshops, you will remind students not only of familiar routines, but also of the different purposes for writing and the qualities of strong writing that they already know. You might say, "I know that you are pros at writing small moment stories from your own lives, and...Wow! Not only do you know how to write small moment stories, but you also know how writers write in certain ways, depending on what they are trying to show. As experienced writers, you should have no trouble coming up with different topics or ideas that you might want to write about. And once you come up with your ideas you'll be able to grab the booklet you need to get started right away."

Within your first few minilessons, you will want to communicate to children that they should expect to make stories that are more grown-up! You might say, "You got started in your booklets in *really* grown-up ways. You know how to choose the right paper, to find your own topics, you even know how to start your books like grown-up writers do...but as I looked at your writing, sometimes the actual pieces didn't look all that grown-up. I think you are ready to write more and to make your writing go from good to great!" Then you will teach them some new strategies to elaborate so that their stories are a lot longer and detailed than they were the preceding year. At this point in the unit, it is important that students draw on all that they know about writing stories, so that they write with great zeal and ambition.

Throughout this bend, you also want to encourage your students to take ownership of their own writing, making decisions as they write to take their pieces from good to great. Your writers need to learn that they are the "bosses" of their writing. You may say to your writers, "I want to teach you that every day, you are in charge of your writing. Ask yourselves what information you need to add to books? What do you need to pay attention to?"

One way or another, you need to be sure that you rally kids to not only recall all that they have learned and to get started doing that work again, but also to work with zeal toward new and ambitious goals. It will also be important to notice where in the process students tend to get stuck—and to teach them how to get past that impasse. Children need to know how to come up with story ideas, to get started, write, finish, reread, revise, and get started on another piece, all without needing teacher-involvement. They need to be problem-solvers in their own writing. You might say, "When writers are stuck and don't know what to do next...they think over their list of all the stuff they know how to do, and they *solve their own problems!*" That is, children need to be able to cycle through the writing process with independence, leaving you free enough to teach. If children are asking questions such as, "Can I be done with this book and start another?" or "Can I get another sheet of paper?" refrain from answering and instead coach writers to generate their own logical answers. Or at least say, "Of course. You do not need to ask me. You are the writer! You are the boss!"

While we imagine that most second graders have been in writing workshop since kindergarten and are therefore well-versed in narrative writing and prepared for this work, some of you may find that your children are more novice narrative writers. If that's the case, you might want to

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

refer to the first-grade curricular calendar, studying the unit on Small Moment writing. You may also want to refer to *Launching the Writing Workshop* from *Units of Study for Primary Writing* (Heinemann, 2003), and eventually, the forthcoming (2013) revision of that book. You will likely want to begin this unit with an on-demand writing assessment, asking children to write a focused narrative to show what they know about writing, and then use the TCRWP's *Narrative Writing Continuum* to assess their work and determine which trajectory best suits this year's class.

Bend Two – Writing Stronger and Longer Drafts Under the Influence of an Author: Writers Study Authors They Admire and Try Their Craft in Their Own Writing

In Bend Two, you and your students will engage in a whole-class close reading of a text by your first selected author mentor. In the forthcoming second-grade launching book, we begin with Jane Yolen's *Owl Moon*, a narrative that is brimful of craft. Before you begin this second bend, then, you will need to decide not only on a first mentor text, but also which craft moves you will highlight in this first text. Of course, you will want to pick ones that are clearly visible in the story itself as well as in other stories your children will be reading on their own. You might focus on painting a picture with words, on building tension, on evoking a particular feeling in readers. Above all, you'll want to convey that published authors have intentions when they write—and that second graders, too, can write with intent. This sets your children up to think strategically about their writing, and to think purposefully about the way in which they write (DOK Level 3). Instead of just trying out one craft move or another, you'll teach them to think, "What am I trying to do?" and then to write in ways that create that effect.

One challenge, then, is how to teach something big, like mood or tension, in ways that second graders can easily grasp and replicate. It's important, then, that before you begin this bend, you yourself study your mentor texts closely—that you find and can name concrete ways that an author does something big so that you can help your children approximate that craft move themselves. If you select *Owl Moon*, you will find that Jane Yolen sets a mood (or paints a picture) by telling what her narrator sees and hears, by indicating the time of year and day, by making comparisons. And you might also see that Yolen creates a feeling of hope, or anticipation, by drawing out suspenseful parts, by writing short sentences, by giving the reader little hints of what's to come.

We suggest that rather than beginning with a straight demo, you open by inviting children to notice what the mentor author does that makes parts of his or her text particularly powerful—or beautiful. Remind students that writers are often influenced by craft. That is, they turn to a mentor author, studying her work to see how the author makes her story as strong as possible and letting the author influence their own work. Then see what your kids notice. Chances are your students will name things that they learned the year prior, like that the mentor author writes with precise actions or tells what a character is thinking or feeling or uses sound words. You'll want to build on these observations, and rephrase them as larger craft moves, such as the examples above of painting a picture with words to draw the reader in or building tension, or whatever it is you hope to teach. And then, of course, you'll want to unpack these moves in your teaching, modeling in your own writing how to use them, and then giving children lots of chances to practice them in their own writing. Throughout this bend, you'll stress that these craft moves are ones children can use anytime they write, but you won't suggest that *all* authors use these exact

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

craft moves *all the time* or in the *exact* same ways. That is, you'll want to bolster independence and to reinforce the idea that writers have choices to make; they don't all do the same thing at the same time in the same way.

This bend of the unit is designed for close reading. Your goal will be to help your students develop the ability to notice the tiny details of a text, to linger and sigh over these, to name what it is that makes them so powerful, and then to transfer some of those craft moves to their own writing. Now is the time to notice the language and sound play and images that authors have clearly spent time carefully choosing. This close in craft work will help children meet several of the Common Core State Standards for reading literature. In particular, children will become experts at describing "how words and phrases (e.g. regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story..." Then too, they'll consider the structure of a story (SS RL 2.5), noticing how the author crafts his or her beginning, ending and most important parts.

Once children have begun to notice and name the craft moves the mentor author uses (such as weaving narratives with rich, precise language to bring something to life), you will want to demo how to use that same technique in a text that you are working on—your own story or a whole-class story—and invite children to think about places where you could use this technique for good purpose. Then you and the class might rewrite those sections to incorporate that technique. You might invite children to reread their own writing in a similar way, and to think of yet another technique the mentor author used; then they can search for places where they could use that same technique to good effect in their writing.

You will want to collect the craft moves and intended effects you and children notice on a chart that children can use to remind them of all you have taught. These could include the techniques such as building tension, using sensory images, using comparisons, repetition, sound words, and using small actions to slow down the story. The chart might contain the powerful part of writing you and children marked, followed by the effect that part has on readers, followed by an example or two of a "craft move" used to generate that effect. For example, the chart might contain a couple of Henkes' precise dialogue tags, followed by the effect these have: "Helps the reader picture exactly how the character talked," and then it might name what Henkes has done: "Uses exact action words instead of 'said.'"

At first, children will summarize a craft move with just a word or a phrase: "He wrote his feelings." You will want to help children talk with much more specificity about what, exactly, made this particular technique so effective. You might point out the decisions the author made, the path he could have—but didn't—take. "He could have just said, 'I felt sad,' but he didn't. Instead he wrote . . . What, exactly, do you think he did here that makes this part convey feelings in such a powerful way?" And then discuss what makes this particular detail, description, or bit of dialogue so effective.

As children delve into their own writing, encourage them to not only on new craft moves, but also on all that they learned in prior years to develop the characters in their stories. You might, for example, teach your writers that to create robust characters they write not only *what* that character does, but also *how* the character does those things, and that they not only tell what a

character thinks or feels, but *show* this. And, you will want to emphasize that writers not only do this rich character development for the main character, or ourselves, but for all the characters in our story. Of course, as you teach each of these lessons, refer back to the mentor author, showing your students how each of these comes to life across the pages of the books they are studying. This will remind your writers that with making reading-writing connections, students won't necessarily choose similar *topics* as the mentor author—but they *will* use similar *techniques*.

As students move through the writing process again and again, we suggest you rally them to write stronger and longer drafts. Students will be trying out the author's craft in their own stories with their writing partners—and those more grown-up ways of working with partners will also be more grown-up ways of engaging in the writing process. By relying on partnerships to help students write really, really well, you can teach kids to engage in more extensive planning for writing, thinking about alternate ways to make the text the best that it could be, and you can teach students to engage in more extensive revision work as they move forward in the unit.

Still, even if you provide youngsters with partners to support a more ambitious writing process, this is just the very start of the year, so students will gesture towards more extensive rehearsal and revision, while many children's work will still whirl fairly quickly between rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing. That is okay. One of your biggest goals is to launch all your writers in such a way that they can work with a lot of independence and zeal. At the start of the year, you'll want to first get all your youngsters cycling through whatever version of the writing process comes easily to them.

You might notice with your writers how your mentor author structures his or her writing (CCSS RL.2.5), perhaps noticing in *Owl Moon* that Jane Yolen spends a lot of time on the part when her daughter and husband call out to the owl because that is an important part of the story, or that the beginning commences the owling trip and the ending brings the characters home. You might also notice how the bulk of the story is about one time, and one big thing that happened, and that the author doesn't just rush right through it, but tells what happened bit by bit; Jane Yolen doesn't just say, "We called out to the owl and then we found one." She takes her time to really make a movie for the reader. It's not one page, problem, next page, solution, but many pages on each. This can also be a way to talk about building volume. "Jane Yolen doesn't stop at five pages, so why should we?" You might also point out in this first part, all the things the author did that we already know how to do, helping writers maintain their repertoire of skills. In this second week, you will probably expect writers will write two or three books, each one a little stronger than the one before.

When you are helping children study and incorporate what authors have done into their own writing, you may want to revisit the TCRWP *Narrative Writing Continuum* and think again about where your children are in the process. For example, if many of them are at Level 1, writing brief chronicles about how they (or a character) progressed through a series of small steps, then you may want to point out what the mentor author has done by finding instances of that author doing some of the work that is especially important in Level 2 narratives. After all, those are just beyond what the children are doing now. For example, the Continuum states that a writer of a Level 2 narrative "provides closure, perhaps either in the form of a final action (dialogue) or a response (a thought or feeling). Jane Yolen ends *Owl Moon* with a reflection that

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

includes an emotion (hope): “When you go owling you don’t need words or warm or anything but hope. That’s what Pa says. The kind of hope that flies on silent wings under a shining Owl Moon.” It is helpful to realize that most qualities of good writing can be thought of as trajectories, as lines of development, along which a writer can develop.

As you study your selected mentor author, you might focus on how he or she writes for the reader. This work can be geared in ways that could challenge any writer or it can be angled to rally children to invest more energy in the basic conventions that second graders are expected to control. If you decide to gear this in ways that are especially challenging, you will probably want to emphasize all the ways that writers write for the ear. Teach children that writers can use punctuation (and the complex sentence structures that generally accompany varied punctuation) to convey meaning by guiding readers to vary their intonation, reading some passages as if they are secret tips tucked into the main message and reading others as if they were confrontational challenges. For example, show students that authors use short ellipses (as they learned in first grade) or sentences to create suspense, or to let their readers know that something big is about to happen. Writers can also use temporal phrases for transitions such as: *after that*, *early one morning*, and *suddenly*.

Plan to end this second bend with a mini-celebration of a first publication. As the bend draws to a close, ask children to pick a favorite piece to fancy up, revise and edit. They could make this choice by thinking which narrative, of all they’ve written, feels the most carefully crafted—which is most likely to get readers to want to slow down and linger, admiring the way in which the writer created a particular effect. Which piece makes them feel most accomplished and proud? Then, during the mini-celebration, you might have a little publication party during a share, during which children read their favorite parts of their narratives. Then the class could name out some of the craft moves their peers used, and say what kind of effect these had on them.

Bend Three – Writers Can Find Their Own Mentors

In the third bend of this unit everyone in the class—both you and the students—will each select a new mentor author to study. Children can pick an author whose books they are currently reading on their own, one whose craft moves they hope to examine closely and mimic in their own writing. Meanwhile, you’ll pick a second mentor text to study, and will refer to this book again and again as you model how to read, noticing craft moves, and then apply those to your own writing. In the forthcoming second grade mentor author unit of study book, Angela Johnson is the second mentor author, and the text of study is *The Leaving Morning*. You might select a different author. Kevin Henkes is a fun one to study, or you could pick Ezra Jack Keats or Cynthia Rylant or Eve Bunting (the latter, only if your children are particularly strong readers). We suggest you select a book children have already read so that they are familiar enough with it to follow the craft moves you “discover” (and not distracted by the work of learning the storyline). Likewise, encourage students to pick a mentor author whose work they know well. Ideally, children will have read several just-right books by that author, and have a sense of his or her voice and style to be able to easily spot patterns of craft moves they can duplicate. Alternatively, you may want to put out a collection of picture books that you select and have partnerships each select one to study.

The big goal of this bend is to teach children how to make reading-writing connections in purposeful ways (CCSS RF 2.4a), so as to inform their own choices as writers. In the last bend, you modeled how to pause at powerful parts of texts, naming what effect the author most likely intended, and *how* she created it, and then trying it out in your own writing. Now you will effectively say to children, “Have at it!”, letting them discover in texts of their own choice the craft moves their authors make that they might try out themselves. This is sophisticated work. Not only are you asking children to apply reading strategies they just learned to their independent reading, you are also expecting that they will discover (to some degree) new, unnamed craft moves, and then apply those to their own writing. This is a multi-step process that would be challenging even for adult learners. It requires a fair amount of independence and strategic, analytical thinking (DOK Level 4). It is essential, then, that you expect and welcome children’s approximations and best, often rough, efforts. Of course, you won’t leave children entirely on their own. You’ll be reinforcing what you taught earlier through a close whole-class study of a second, somewhat simpler text, and you’ll also model how to do the work of noticing and discovering craft moves that an author with a different kind of voice and story makes.

Do expect to scaffold children’s work through conferences, and keep an eye on which of your children need similar kinds of help so that you can gather those students in small groups. Now is also a good time to stress the role of partnerships. Partners can work together to answer questions or clarify something the text is saying (CCSS SL 2.1c) or when they want to run something they have written by a reader. Perhaps a child tries out a craft move she discovers in her mentor text but isn’t sure she used it to the same effect as the mentor author. She can ask her partner to read what she has written and then to name the effect of that bit of writing. Meanwhile, another child may want to check that his story is one a reader can follow; are the parts of the story sequential? Are there enough details for readers to paint a picture in their minds? Is there a good mix of actions, thoughts, and feelings? (CCSS W 2.3). Through this work with partners, children will be building their reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills all at once. It would be wise to listen in as children talk, reinforcing the lines of thinking and advising they do well, and helping to lift the level of their talk when it falters.

Once children have read their own mentor author texts simply to appreciate them, they can reread these, looking for places in these texts that “got” to them. Portions of a story that make a reader say “Ahh” are portions that he or she will want to study, asking “What did the writer do to get this response?” Remind children that as they reread a text, they might think especially about the parts that made them feel something intense or have a thought, parts whose images got them to linger, parts they want to savor much like they would savor an ice cream cone on a warm day. You might say, “Writers, when we read well crafted stories by other authors, we sometimes need to remind ourselves to slow our reading down, to pause to notice the powerful parts. Then we savor those parts, our favorite ones. And *then* we think, ‘What exactly did this writer do to create that reaction, that I could try out in my own writing?’”

You may be thinking that the work of Bend Two will vary greatly from teacher to teacher, depending on the mentor text selection—this isn’t the case. The purpose of the bend is to teach children how to transfer what they notice to their own writing—and the message you’ll want to convey is that it doesn’t matter what author a reader selects, or what craft moves he or she notices. This work—of reading on the lookout for craft moves that affect readers in powerful

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

ways, and then trying that out in one's own writing, requires the same kind of close reading, analytical thinking, and purposeful writing no matter the text or author under study.

That said, there are some craft moves that many authors use again and again, to powerful effect. Using precise and beautiful language is one. Using similes and metaphors (or comparisons, as you'll likely say to children this age) is another. Many authors use rhythm, alliteration, and sound words (onomatopoeia) to name just a few. Expect to learn from your children's observations, too—kids often notice things we don't! Meanwhile, you will probably want to angle your own observations toward things that will not only build your children's reading and writing skills, but also provide opportunities for them to work toward the Common Core's expectations for second graders. For example, you might notice how your mentor author structures his or her piece of writing so that "the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action" (RL 2.5). Or you might notice how the author uses "words and phrases...to supply rhythm and meaning in a story..." (RL 2.4).

If your mentor text is *Sheila Rae, the Brave*, you can share how you felt humbled and awed by the author's precise word choice: "The sounds became more frightening. The thoughts became more horrible. Sheila Rae sat down on a rock and cried. 'Help,' she sniffed." You might say, "Listen and envision this moment. Can't you just see Sheila Rae on the rock, and hear her voice as she sniffs 'Help' in a tiny voice? Can't you just feel how frightened she is? Kevin Henkes didn't just write, 'She was scared. She said, "Help."' No, he imagined it and tried to choose words that showed exactly what Sheila Rae did and said so we could feel what she felt—so that we can understand her point of view (CCSS RL 2.6)."

Of course, your goal is not only that children notice powerful parts in texts, but that they simultaneously think about how to try out the craft moves they notice, in their own writing. You want kids to say, "That was delicious! I'm so inspired! I want to write just like that!" and then race back to their pieces and write feverishly. To this end, teach children that writers analyze the text. You might ask students, "What, exactly, did Kevin Henkes do that worked so well? What did he do to make this part stand out?" In the example we just saw, Kevin Henkes chose a dialogue tag, "sniffed," that captured a feeling; students too could try dialogue tags that communicate a feeling. And you could ask children, "What did this author do to make me feel so sad? What did this author do to make me laugh?" and so on.

During this bend, you and your children might also notice some more technical craft moves, for instance, that a mentor author uses punctuation to grow suspense (ellipses, dash marks, or commas), making the sentences sound more and more exciting, or for emphasis, as Molly Bang does in *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really, Really Angry*. . . . Point out to students that even the title includes a dash and ellipses. Or they use short sentences, as Kevin Henkes does in *Sheila Rae, the Brave* to convey fast actions. He writes, "Sheila Rae walked and walked. She turned corners. She crossed streets. It suddenly occurred to Sheila Rae that nothing looked familiar." Observations like these build on the learning students did in first grade. By pointing out several ways to create tension (for example), you convey to students that there is more than one way to create a particular effect in writing—and you of course build students' repertoire of craft moves (DOK Level 3).

As their writing abilities grow, your second grade writers will be eager to show it all off. Although you will no doubt rejoice at this enthusiasm and in their new-found confidence, you will need to be prepared to rein them in at times. For example, second graders often write with so much detail that it ends up swamping their writing. Teach children that just as authors write with intent as they consider craft and meaning, they also pick and choose which details to share, settling on ones that bring out meaning, or that paint a clear picture.

Second graders also tend to write sentences that go on endlessly, ones that sound like this: “and then . . . and then . . . and then . . .” In their eagerness to get lots of information onto the page, they miss the chance to write varied sentences. Help them find new ways of elaborating by examining ways in which mentor authors elaborate without resorting to “and then” over and over. For example, you could point out that in *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* . . . Molly Bang could have written, “She kicks and then she screams and then she wants to smash the world to smithereens and then she roars a red, red roar and then Sophie is a volcano, ready to explode.” Instead, Molly draws out the action, showing us how Sophie’s anger builds and builds by separating these actions into short, fast bits: “She kicks. She screams. She wants to smash the world to smithereens. She roars a red, red roar. Sophie is a volcano, ready to explode.” And then, Sophie takes action: she runs! “She runs and runs and runs until she can’t run anymore.” Tell children to listen to the difference between how each version sounds. You might revisit the topic of word choice, too, noting the effect of a word like “smithereens,” to this particular text, and you can point out the author’s use of comparison (“Sophie is a volcano...”) to create a particularly powerful image of a very angry little girl.

Noticing word choice is the perfect segue into emphasizing the importance of using varied and rich vocabulary words as you write narratives, which is something your second graders can and should be doing as they craft narratives. The Common Core expects second graders to “demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings” (L 2.5) and one way to deepen this understanding is by playing around with words that represent different shades of meaning (L 2.5b): is the boy nervous, scared, or terrified? Does the girl nibble, eat, or inhale her food?

There are any number of language and foundation skills you could choose to teach during this bend, and to some extent, the work your children do—and the books they read—will guide your instructional choices. You may want to familiarize yourself with the second grade standards in language and foundational skills to be sure you’re preparing your children to begin to do the work that is expected of them by the year’s end.

Bend Four – Revise, Edit and Celebrate

During the last bend of this unit, you will return to the topic of revision, only this time you will emphasize the importance of ambitious and purposeful revision. Students will be revising toward the goal of publication. Tell students that they will again pick a piece (or several) that they especially love, to fix up and share at the end of the unit.

As children prepare for publication, remind them that writers write with readers in mind, making sure their texts include things like end punctuation. When you teach this, remind writers that usually a person thinks of a whole sentence, a whole thought, and then they write without

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

stopping until they get to the end of that thought and put a period down. Then they have another whole thought, and starting with a capital letter they write and write until that thought is down, again without stopping, and they put a period there. Your students will have been practicing this since the beginning of this unit, but chances are they still won't do it perfectly—don't worry. Your goal is for kids to begin to write in sentences of thought, punctuating on the run to their best abilities. Punctuation should not be an afterthought. Of course, once a text is completed writers can reread, using punctuation as road signs, finding places where the punctuation may need to be altered.

As children work on writing with voice and using punctuation and sentence structure to bring out the stories they have selected to publish, suggest they look at mentor texts again, noting the sparkling and unusual words mentor authors use, the ways they use short sentences, and even sentence fragments, to increase the pace and excitement. Or how they alternate long and short sentences, or have repeated sequences of long or short. You might teach children to look at how the punctuation affects the tone, and the unusual punctuation, such as ellipses and dashes. Then, too, you might teach your children that they can look at how a mentor opens up his subjects—the things he chooses to illuminate in his stories—as well as how he ends a piece, paying attention to overall structure (CCSS RL 2.5).

You might celebrate your students' growth as writers by having them publish their books as picture books, just like their mentor authors. They can study how these authors create titles for their books, to whom they write dedications, and what information they choose to include in the "About the Author" section. Authors also have publication parties where they share snippets of their books with an audience. Place students' books in your classroom library or on a special shelf in your library, and make them available for independent reading.

Spelling

While focusing on content and trying, above all, to be sure your children are writing up a storm, you'll also want to familiarize yourself with your students as spellers—the words they know how to spell with automaticity, the features of words they have under control, and what they know about problem-solving words. By administering spelling assessments such as Donald Bear's Spelling Inventory in *Words Their Way* and analyzing student writing, you can determine the instruction you provide during word study and writing workshop to support students in reaching end-of-year expectations of knowing spelling-sound correspondences for common vowel teams (CCSS FS 2.3) and using these learned spelling patterns when writing words and continuing the work they were learning in first grade of spelling frequently occurring words correctly. Your students are at a transitional stage for spelling, a time when they will become more fluent as they learn many patterns designed to help them problem-solve words more efficiently. You'll want to assess and plan instruction that develops your students' knowledge of word features, sight words, and word-solving strategies. You will do all of this with the goal of helping students become efficient problem-solvers of words as they write, just as they are doing as they read.

Learning and Using Knowledge of Vowel Sounds and Patterns

Most of your second graders have probably secured phonemic awareness (the alphabetic principle, understanding and applying the knowledge that each word has a sequence of sounds, each represented by a letter or letters); are recognizing parts (common spelling patterns) they've

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

learned, such as /th/, /sh/, /an/, /ar/, and /mp/; and are recording one letter for each vowel sound heard even if that spelling may not yet be accurate. Make sure that what you find from your spelling inventory aligns with what you see in their writing, just as you check to be sure they are also applying what you see on the spelling inventory to their reading. Remember that if they are able to apply knowledge of spelling features when writing in isolation but not in the context of writing, you'll want to begin your word study instruction with the features they are still learning to use in the context of writing.

During September and October you will probably support your second graders in the work of learning the ways that vowel sounds are spelled within words, which will be the work of word study for much of the year. The work will first begin with supporting students in distinguishing between short and long vowels by sound, if that is not already secure. Only then will they be ready to do the work of exploring the pattern layer of English spelling where they learn the different patterns of letters that make the same sound (a_e, ai, -ay). If you begin your word study with an emphasis on isolating the vowel phoneme in each syllable of a word and determining if it is long or short, then in writing you will not yet expect that writers write the spelling of those vowel sounds accurately, but that they begin to try out different ways that spelling could look. From reading, they've recognized that vowels make different sounds depending on the spelling so you'll see students start to approximate this skill by writing words like 'soap' as 'sope' or 'soap' or 'soop.' This is great work at this point in the year as children know vowels make different sounds and that a vowel sound can be affected by other vowels and certain consonants, and that one sound can be represented by various spelling patterns. Once students are doing this, you will want to move to teaching patterns, specifically the CVCe (consonant-vowel-consonant-e) patterns (bake, rope, hide) where they learn that there is a vowel mark, in this case a silent *e*, to signal the long vowel sound. Marie Clay has said that studying spelling patterns should not be about having kids memorize all the words within a spelling pattern but rather that they know that a pattern exists and can be used to make lots of other words. This work is very different from the letter-sound work that happened in kindergarten and first grade (b makes one sound and is always written the same) and may require a slower pace for transfer to occur. In fact, research suggests that a typical child may be involved in the spelling stage of vowel work for approximately two years, so make sure to allow for plenty of review, reflection, and activities that require children to apply this work to their reading and writing.

Word-Solving Strategies and Tools

Your students will probably come to you using strategies where they either listen for a word sound by sound and record a letter or letters, or problem-solve one small part at a time, listening for spelling patterns they've learned. Hopefully they have also come with the skill of breaking words into syllables, especially for complex words, and problem-solving one syllable at a time. You may want to borrow a first grade chart of ways to spell words so that you can use it to remind students of what they already know about spelling words. You will probably emphasize the strategy of problem-solving syllable by syllable in the first few months of school because each syllable has a vowel and so much of your work this year will be on supporting students in writing these vowel sounds, eventually with accuracy. Demonstrate how you listen for and record a letter or letters for each vowel and then reread to check that each syllable will be read with the correct vowel sound (again, any vowel marker may be used when students are at the beginning stages of this work).

Unit One – Writing Stories Under Mentor Authors

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

To help support the transfer from word study to writing, you will want to have a class chart that lists strategies (and examples of this work) for spelling words. You may also have small versions of this chart for students, especially if you want to individualize the strategies for different learners. Having the anchor words from word study that represent the patterns being studied can be helpful as well and you may have word feature charts or have these words on the word wall in a different color/font to indicate their purpose and distinguish them from the high frequency words. Your students may also have a word study notebook that they will have out during writing time as a reminder and reference tool.

Using High Frequency Words

While you are teaching students to apply their knowledge about specific spelling features (letters and sound review early on), it is important to bring the work around learning specific *words* into your writing instruction. Children already know many high frequency words from kindergarten and first grade, and the big work in second grade is to make sure they are using this knowledge to write efficiently. Are the words students know ones that they truly read and write with automaticity? This may mean revisiting words from first grade that students are not yet spelling correctly in their writing or which you observe them problem-solving during writing rather than writing from memory. Just as you've taught students a way to remember a word in word study—making a visual image of it in their minds—now they need to use that to write a word quickly and refer to the word wall to help them if they've lost that picture of it or need to check that it is right. As you get to know your spellers, you will find some who approach each word as one that needs to be problem-solved sound by sound, even words that are in their sight vocabularies. Others are often afraid to write words they don't know and try to write using only words they already know. Hence the importance of teaching students to think before writing a word whether it is one that they have to slow down to problem-solve or one that they can speed up for and write quickly.

As you confer, you may need to provide students with more support using the word wall—showing them how to locate the word, picture it in their mind, and then try to write it from memory. This helps them learn to use the word wall *and* learn the word at the same time. You might use prompts such as “Say the word. Do you know it? Picture it. Write it fast,” or “Say the word. Do you know it? Where can you find it?”

Editing

During your writing units you will be teaching writers ways to edit their work to make it easy for the reader and for themselves to read. Ultimately, this helps them to monitor and correct visual aspects of their texts—spelling, capitalization, punctuation. It is important that this instruction doesn't just come at the end during the publication process. Children should be monitoring as they write their texts, rereading along the way and asking themselves not only if the words they are writing make sense and sound like a book, but also asking themselves, “Does this look right?” Teach them to stop when they realize something isn't quite right, cross it out, and fix it, possibly trying the word a few different ways. This parallels the work you are teaching them in reading. It is important to transfer this knowledge of monitoring and self-correcting from one context to another (DOK 4).

You will probably want to build on editing skills and checklists that students learned and used in first grade. Review ways to check spelling and the use of ending punctuation and capital letters for names and at the beginnings of sentences. You may decide to teach into the use of reference materials to check spelling (CCSS L2.2) by supporting children with the use of the word wall and word study notebooks. This will help them when they use more advanced published reference materials such as simple dictionaries in later units.

Unit Two – Writing and Revising Realistic Fiction

October/November

Your second graders will undoubtedly be eager to write fiction, especially as they become more and more immersed in the fictional worlds of the characters they meet in books, and now is a perfect time to introduce this unit on realistic fiction. Across this unit, the most important message you'll convey is this: Writers use everything they know to make up their own stories. Using everything you have learned from the last unit, you can write realistic fiction stories about a character you dream up, rather than to recount true stories from your own life. That is, you will want to make it clear to your children that while they are embarking on a new unit, they will want to bring all that they just learned last month, along with all they learned in kindergarten and first grade, to write realistic fiction stories. You will encourage writers to draw on all the craft moves they learned from studying mentor authors and all the strategies they now hold in their repertoire for writing small moments. The Common Core State Standards call for second graders to write sequenced narratives, while providing a sense of closure, so you will want to help your writers think about the arc and language of their stories, about the passage of time, and about the need for a conclusion that brings the story together. The goal for this unit will be to write well-elaborated short stories.

As you head into the unit, understand that children will probably write lots of stories across the month, and they will progress through those stories, working at their own unique paces. Your launching day will make all the difference in the world. On this day, ask writers to come up with an initial plan for several different stories. Demonstrate how writers first need to think about what it is they are going to write about, and then make a plan for how their story might go. For realistic fiction you might say, "Writers, when we are writing realistic fiction stories, we don't just write any old story, instead we think of a story with a problem." You will then want to teach them that after thinking of such a story idea, writers write the start of a story on paper and then think of another possible story and write the start of that story, as well. If you teach students to plan out and start several stories, right at the start of the unit, it will be far more likely that as the unit unfolds, writers who complete a story quickly will have others in-waiting and will be able to shift to write those other stories, not waiting until the whole class progresses in sync from one story to the next. This will allow the fiction writing workshop to feel like a workshop, with writers working zealously on their pieces, with some starting a new story on any given day while others continue working on a story. The unit ends with an invitation for writers to look back on all the work they have generated—which for some students will be an armload of stories—selecting one or two of those stories to revise deeply and extensively.

In addition to emphasizing repertoire and independence, you will also want to use this unit as an opportunity for building volume. You can support children to write longer stories in part by shrinking the size of the planning-pictures children make, or by encouraging some children to jot a quick phrase in each of those planning boxes rather than relying on drawing, which is a more time-consuming vehicle for planning. Then too, think about the paper choice that children will have during this unit. If children have tended to write in five-page booklets with five or six lines on a page, some of their pages will now contain more lines. Of course, every table needs extra pages so that students can expand their booklets, and also every table requires flaps and tape so

Unit Two – Writing and Revising Realistic Fiction

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

that writers are encouraged to revise without waiting for encouragement to do so. Don't underestimate the expectations that can be conveyed just through your materials!

Assessment

Although this is a unit on realistic fiction writing, you will want to rely on the narrative work that your students did across the Authors as Mentors unit to inform your instruction. The summative assessment that you administered as an on-demand at the end of Unit 1 will allow you to see what skills your children have grasped in narrative writing. Hold these pieces alongside the *RWP Narrative Writing* continuum in order to see where your students fall. Most of your second graders will likely be at a level 1 approaching level 2 on the continuum. While this unit does focus on fiction writing, the bigger goals of the unit revolve around the narrative skills stated by the Common Core (W 2.3), so it is important to address those big skills in terms of assessment.

In order to determine what your students already know about writing in this genre, you'll probably choose to administer an on-demand assessment at the beginning of this unit, prompting students to compose a realistic fiction story. This will be useful data to collect, helping you pinpoint the skills and strategies children are carrying into second grade, since many of them are likely to have participated in a realistic fiction writing unit in first grade.

Once the unit starts, you will want to continue to assess your writers and their progress informally through one-on-one conferences and small groups. You can ask students some of the following questions to collect even more data:

- "How are you planning for this story?" and "What will happen to the characters in each part of the story?"
- "What will happen to the characters at the end?" or "How will you close the story?"
- "What details are you using or are you planning to use in this part?"

You may decide to look through student folders at several points across the unit to ascertain what skills and strategies children are transferring into their independent work, as well as to inform your next steps for the unit. This research can influence your instructional planning, targeting specific strategies during minilessons, individual conferences, and small group work.

Bend One – Writers Draw on Everything They Know to Write Fiction Stories

Early in the unit, you'll ask children to recall what they already know about writing fiction stories. Most of your youngsters will have written fiction stories last year, and the experience will probably have been memorable. You could even ask children to bring in stories they wrote last year, or at the very least, they could tell partners about those stories. By starting the unit with this invitation for students to recall previous experiences with writing fiction, you are making sure that you do not act as if this will be the very first time your children have ever written fiction. If you administered an initial on-demand assessment, you will want to use these pieces to pinpoint what students remember from realistic fiction writing in first grade, and then adapt your unit plans accordingly.

Before you ask, "What did you learn last year?" you will need to predict what you'll hear and decide whether your message will be "This year, let's do the same," or whether your message will be "This year, because you are older now, let's now try . . ." For example, you may hear that

Unit Two – Writing and Revising Realistic Fiction

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

last year, children were channeled to write stories about a child who was their age. They may have learned that authors often base their stories on themselves or on people they know. We suggest you continue to channel kids to write about characters who are roughly their age, so that youngsters have a wealth of experiences and emotions they can channel into that character. Children may report that in previous years, they often spent a day or two coming up with ideas for their character, drawing the character and writing notes about the character. It is true that this is one way to get started on fiction stories—and some writers may continue to use that as their starting strategy. But in general, we have found that it works best for writers to first come up with a general storyline and only then develop a character or two within that story. So we're recommending that a child might first decide, for example, to write about a character who is new to the school and has no friends, and then afterwards flesh out the character, deciding if this youngster is a girl or a boy, giving the character a name, and so on. You might suggest writers begin by collecting story ideas in their Tiny Topic notepads, before getting started on their booklets. The child might write, for example, "a kid moves and has no friends and then gets a friend somehow," or "a kid wants to make a goal in soccer, and then does." You should suggest that children carry their Tiny Topic notepads home with them, as they did in the previous unit, thinking of and jotting down story ideas while they are away from the writing workshop. As a child waits for the school bus, he might jot down, "misses bus and walks to school." As the child heads off to art class, he might write, "boy makes great painting in art and wins prize."

It may be that a writer generates five or six story ideas, selects three as good possibilities, and then writes a couple of possible first pages for each of these stories. So, encourage writers to dive in, using several story ideas. If you can help writers to generate a bunch of different possibilities, you help them realize that writing is a process of trying something out, then reviewing it critically and thinking, "Wait, I have a better idea!"

Once a writer has chosen one of these story ideas, he will want to spend a bit of time—five minutes, perhaps—rehearsing for that story. It helps for the writer to tell the story she might write across her fingers or to say the story aloud as she turns the pages of a blank booklet, perhaps jotting down a word or phrase to remember what is going to happen from one scene to the next. By telling a story multiple times and in multiple ways before writing, the writer makes it likely that the first draft will be much more effective.

Writers can do this storytelling, touching the pages of a blank booklet on which they will soon write, or they can use a strategy that older students use, which is to fold a sheet of notebook paper into quadrants to make a mini-booklet, quickly sketching four panels to capture what happens first, next, after that, and last. Using these four "pages," you can suggest that each child quickly sketch how his or her story might go. The story about the boy winning a soccer goal, for instance, could start: page one, a stick-figure boy kicking the ball into the goal—no words are necessary. The writer would then need to figure out what occupies the next pages. Is the boy treated like a hero by his teammates—and if so, how exactly? Then, what happens on page three? Does he teach a little kid how to play soccer and watch while that kid makes a goal? The point of this mini-booklet is to take all of three minutes to sketch a story from start to finish, so a child can design a couple of versions for how the story might go, storytelling each (touching the page and saying aloud the exact words the writer might write). We prefer these mini-booklets to storyboards, but the two are really versions of each other and you can use either scaffold, or

neither. The important thing is that in any case, you will not want to give writers ditto sheets on which to plan their writing. These should be informal—not photocopied! This way students can take the planning strategies you introduce and transfer them to any piece of writing. Rather than relying on the teacher to provide a graphic organizer, children will learn how to make their own planning page, using a blank sheet of paper. It is also important for writers to be encouraged to try their stories one way and then another way, deciding how they should go. In essence, they are revising before they are even writing a single word. Once the writer has a plan for the story, he or she can shift to sketching pictures across the pages of a full-sized booklet, or if writers prefer, into immediately writing the words of the story.

A commitment to revision is part and parcel of a commitment to teach writing as a process. Therefore in order to emphasize the writing process across this unit, you will want to encourage revision right from the start. The Common Core asks that kids strengthen their writing through revision and response to feedback, so you will want your writers to revise as they go, finding places to integrate the new skills they learn, in order to make their writing more powerful. Through rereading and ongoing revision, writing becomes a tool for thinking. Writing is a powerful tool for thinking precisely, because when we write, we can take fleeting and intangible memories, insights, and images and make them concrete. When we talk, our thoughts float away. When we write, we put our thoughts onto paper. We can stick them in our pocket. We can come back to them later. We can reread our first thoughts and realize gaps. We can look again and see connections between two different sets of ideas.

You can encourage revision by revisiting all of the craft moves that your children learned from mentor authors in the last unit. Pull out a chart that you created from the first unit, and place it front and center, since many of the moves you noted will be just as useful for realistic fiction stories as for personal narratives. You will also want to revisit the power of partnerships in ongoing revision. Reminding your writers how since unit one, they have been reading their pieces to their partners, acting out what’s happening and asking one another questions to make their pieces go from good to great. You will want your students to be able to both give and take feedback from peers in order to strengthen their writing in alignment with the revision work named in the Common Core State Standards (W 2.5).

Of course, once students have written a story they’ll proceed to write another—not waiting for you to march them along, in sync! As children cycle through the process, writing more and more stories, you can continue to teach in ways that lift the level of stories that have yet to be written, and in ways that prompt writers to reread and reconsider stories they once thought were done. It could be, for example, that your children write their first stories without you having had much of a chance yet to teach them that once a writer has a storyline, it helps to take some time to develop the main character. That’s okay. You could teach this to children when most of them are in the midst of their second story.

While you will want your students to develop the characters in their stories, please try to steer clear of channeling students to work within ditto sheet graphic organizers with spaces for listing a character’s internal and external characteristics—that work has not panned out for K–2 writers—it is best saved for upper elementary grades. We do, however, believe a writer can think and talk about what the character is like and act out that character showing how she goes about

doing things. Is she shy? Timid? Frantic? Once a child has a character well in mind, the child's writing can be much more colorful. This is a great opportunity to help students connect the work that they are doing with characters, as readers. In partnerships, you'll ask writers to read their stories to each other, acting as the characters in order to give feedback to aid revision--suggesting ways to make the character move, or speak, and adding smaller actions, dialogue, or internal thought to bring out feelings, or dominant traits.

Bend Two – Lifting the Quality of Effective Fiction Writing

By the time many of your children are working on their third and fourth stories (likely somewhere across this second week), you will probably choose to teach writers ways to dramatically improve their writing. To get children to tell, not summarize, their story, the writer will first decide, "This is a story about a girl who wants a dog because all her friends have them. At first her parents say, 'No,' and then she gets it." Then, the writer will move on to envisioning each scene as she tells the story in her writing. You'll want to move writers away from writing: "Emily wanted a dog. 'Can I have one?' she asked. Her mother said, 'No,' because they didn't have the money. Then one day she was walking to school and she saw something and it was a dog." End of story. It will be crucial to teach children that they need to think, "What, *exactly*, will be happening at the start of my story? If the girl wants a dog, what exactly is she *doing* to show this? If this were a play, what would she be doing on stage?" Perhaps the child decides that the main character is going to talk to her mother about getting a dog. The child might write, "Emily walked into the kitchen. Her mom was making dinner. 'Mom! Mom! Can I have a dog? Annie has one and it's really cute,' Emily whined." As she storytells, you'll teach her to make a movie in her mind of the exact story, and begin imagining it bit by bit.

All the advice you might give children to include characters' feelings or to make characters talk is almost inconsequential compared to the absolutely crucial importance of teaching kids to relive the story as they write, imagining the story unfold. This will help students to write in an organized and fluid fashion so that they write sequenced stories with greater elaboration. One of the best ways to help children imagine a story, by making a mental movie, is to encourage the writer to act out the entire story, recording not only what each character says and does, but also describing each scene in detail including where the characters are and what is happening around the characters. Again this work can be an effective way for partners to work together, helping find words to describe those actions and bring voice to the dialogue that they act out together at the start of your workshop.

You will also remind your writers to look closely not only at the authors that the class studied in the Authors as Mentors unit, but also at the books they are reading, using these as mentor texts to explore how these authors bring their favorite characters to life. You may teach students how to study mentor texts to discover ways authors use time transitions to make each scene of their story flow, thereby teaching your children to transition more smoothly from scene to scene, while also helping them to use more sophisticated sentence structures.

Remind them that not only do writers look to other authors to learn how to become better writers, but they also look to their favorite books and the characters in them to see how good writers don't just say, "The boy felt sad." Instead they flesh out their characters in ways that make the characters come to life, *showing* these feelings, rather than *telling* them. In order to talk up the

value to learning from mentor texts, you might say to your students, “If we want to write stories that will draw people in and make people want to read them, we can remember that other writers have already done writing that is like the work we are doing, and we can use their writing to make our writing better.”

You can also show them how to elaborate the inside story as well as the outside story, and this may be the most valuable writing skill they’ll develop—it’s one that makes for beautiful writing. So, for instance, you might show Emily’s actions and feelings: “Emily walked into the kitchen where her mother stood cooking dinner. ‘Mom, I really want that dog. I’m the only one at school without one!’ Emily felt hopeful. She stood there, eyes wide, fingers crossed, holding her breath.” Writers use dialogue to move the story as well as to stretch out a meaningful scene. So, you will want to encourage your writers to include what the characters in each scene say, in addition to actions and feelings. It is by using a combination of these details that the characters are able to pop off the page, not just a feeling here or some dialogue there. Likewise, you’ll remind children that when they revise fiction, they can draw on the exact same techniques they used for revision of personal narratives. Keep your charts that support elaboration and revision from the previous unit front and center.

As children do this work, you can do just a little bit to help them create a shapely story. That is, if the story is about a girl who in the end visits her grandmother in South America, you will need to teach children that typically something happens to make this goal hard to achieve. Generally, the character wants something and then meets trouble along the way to achieve the goal. The girl wants to visit her grandmother in South America, but what will make this difficult to achieve? Does the girl’s father not want her to go? Is the girl afraid of flying? Is the plane ticket too expensive? You’ll encourage your writers to ask, “What trouble will get in my character’s way to make this problem hard to solve?” and consider ways to build tension in their stories, stretching the problem across pages.

Bend Three – Writers Choose Their Best Work to Revise and Publish

Just as in the Authors as Mentors unit, you will want to spend the last week of the unit emphasizing revision. In the last unit, you spent time teaching children how to set plans for their work and then use a range of tools to carry those plans forward, lifting the quality of their work. You will not want to let this go, but instead pull those tools back out, emphasizing to your class that the tools you used in the last unit are helpful tools for all writing. That is, you want children to understand that because revision is a part of the writing process it will be revisited over and over again across the year. Again, they will choose their very, very best and make it better. Revision is a complement to good writing.

You will want to take this time to pull out the charts from this unit and the last unit, posting them around the room for children to reference. Your writers can study the charts, and think, “What will I work on today? How will I make my piece the very, very best it can be?” Then, with their plan in mind, they can go to the classroom writing center and gather the necessary materials before diving into their work. Of course, to facilitate this work, you will need to ensure that children have access to the necessary materials. You will likely want to provide them with a revision folder and a color pen, swatches of paper on which they can add paragraphs to their drafts, and flaps of paper which can be taped over parts of the story they decide to revise. Teach

Unit Two – Writing and Revising Realistic Fiction

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

them to use staple removers, if they don't already use these regularly, so they can make their books longer or shorter.

At this point, your writers will be familiar with many purposes of revision and they will be quite adept at setting goals for their own revision using the charts. It is also likely that many children are summarizing during this time, so that you might want to highlight that one of the most important reasons for second graders to revise is that this allows them to elaborate. If a child wrote, "For Jorge's birthday, he got a bike," teach this child that he or she can cross out that summary of the event and instead storytell exactly what happened, step by step. Injunctions to "add more information" or "add details" have too often led to pages that contain a lot of summary—pages like this: "For Jorge's birthday, he got a bike. It was red and has a basket. He liked it. He was happy. It was a great, great bike." Help children revise instead by storytelling; help them create little scenes in their minds using dialogue and small actions to let the story unfold on the page. "On Jorge's birthday, Dad said, 'Cover your eyes.' Then he heard him opening some doors, moving some things. 'Open your eyes!' Dad called. Jorge opened them and saw his Dad wheeling a red bike into the room."

In addition to revising for elaboration, writers also revise to draw forth the meaning of the story, thinking about why this story matters and then writing it in a way to highlight that meaning. So you might teach these writers to think, "Which page is the most important? Where in my story does the main character have the biggest feelings?" Once the child has identified the most important or most emotionally laden page of the story, help the child rewrite that page from top to bottom, this time reliving the moment and depicting it with details. For example, a student rereading a story he wrote about his character, Adam, cooking arroz con pollo with his Grandma on Saturday, might decide that the most important part was when Adam and his grandmother smelled something burning. He might cross out his first version of this page, rewriting that page on two long pages that he inserts into the book. This new version might include dialogue and small actions that show Adam's feelings.

In addition to teaching children to revise the most important parts, you might also teach students to create more literary beginnings or endings to their stories. It is useful to show kids that they can try writing a few different versions of a lead or an ending (or any part of their story) and then think about which version works best. Children may want to study mentor texts the class has read, trying to name what the writer did in his or her beginning or ending.

Once your writers have polished up their writing--capitalizing proper nouns, like names and special places, rereading to ensure the story remains in a third-person voice, and adding words or punctuation that may have been left out--you will want to find a way to celebrate their stories. You might set up a time to share with another class or older buddies in another grade, or you might just have them form small groups to share among themselves. You could even add their stories to your classroom library to be shared over time. Perhaps, you'll ask partners to work together, writing blurbs for the back of each other's books to convince people to read them! Whatever you choose, you will want to celebrate all they have learned in this unit.

Unit Three – Informational Writing

November/December

Overview

This unit draws largely on the forthcoming 2nd Grade Information Writing book (Calkins, 2013), a rewrite of the original K-2 *Nonfiction: Procedures and Reports* (Calkins, 2003). In addition, it is rooted in the writing process approach that the late Pulitzer Prize winning writer, Donald Murray is credited with developing. Murray believed that students should live the wide-awake life of writers, experiencing their lives and then capturing those experiences on the page. This unit on information writing gets second graders to do just that, setting them up to draw both on what they know as writers, and on what they know about the world. In this information age, there is a greater demand for informational writing (reflected in the Common Core Standards referenced below), and this unit lays the groundwork for the kind of thinking and writing that students will increasingly need to do.

Think about the reading and the writing that *you* do. You probably read the newspaper, perhaps blogs, emails pertaining to school, books about teaching, brochures about upcoming events, magazines and web sites and articles on whatever topics interest you. All of these texts fit under the broad category of informational texts. For the next six to seven weeks, your students will be writing explanatory/informative texts, one of three types of writing outlined in the Common Core State Standards. The Standards call for second grade students to “write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section” (W 2.2). The Standards also expect second grade students to “focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing” with support and guidance from adults and peers (W 2.5), and “recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question” (W 2.8). That is, you will need to cover a lot of ground in this one unit!

You will channel children to choose topics about which they are passionate and to organize their information intentionally. It relies heavily on the use of mentor texts so that kids generate different possibilities for how their books might look and sound. After studying different kinds of nonfiction mentor texts, children will write and organize their books to communicate information and ideas in new ways.

Students will publish two information books over the course of this unit. That’s not to say they won’t be writing lots and lots of books along the way—they will (expect about two to four books per week)! After writing many books, they will choose one to revise, edit, and publish. But instead of only completing the full writing process with one book at the end of the unit, as they’ve done in prior years, *this* year they will move through the full process twice, once toward the middle of the unit, and once at the end. You will expect them to apply the strategies they learned while working on the first published book to their second, and to move through the process this second time with greater autonomy (DOK level 4).

At the start of the unit, you will channel students to write books on a variety of topics drawn from their own life experiences. You will teach them to organize their books with tables of

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012-2013

2

contents and chapter headings, and to create sub-topics—component parts—for each chapter. That is, students will learn how to categorize and organize information not just across a book, but within each category. The first part of this unit will develop children’s skill of recalling information from their own experiences to answer questions (CCSS W 2.8), and the focus will be on determining what a reader needs to know in order to learn about one topic or another. As the first part of the unit comes to a close, students will choose one of their booklets to revise and edit as best they can for publication. Then the class will celebrate the work they have done thus far.

In the second portion of the unit, the shift switches from writing across topics to writing extensively about one expert project. Students will write variously structured texts on a single topic, drawing on a variety of evidence from outside sources. For example, a writer who chooses “kittens” as his topic, might end up with a Question/Answer Book titled, *Can You Handle Having a Kitten?* with pages that ask and answer questions. Next, he might write a Compare/Contrast Book, *Puppies and Kittens*, in which each chapter compares or contrasts one aspect of his topic with a similar aspect of a different topic. Next, he might write a time order book, *Growing Up Curious—From Kitten to Cat*, where he chronicles the life cycle of a kitten.

Students will read and write nonfiction books entirely differently if they, themselves, are brought backstage to think about the decisions that the authors of nonfiction texts need to make. They’ll look at the texts written by other authors, understanding that those authors are trying not only to put facts onto the page, but also to make readers feel, think, and act in certain ways. A book about whales may not be just an objective just-the-facts account, it may, in fact, be a plea—sometimes subtle and sometimes less so—for readers to respect, admire and yes, advocate for these beautiful, massive creatures. The picture on the cover of the text was chosen not just because it’s “on topic”—but also because it connotes an intended feeling. The subheads not only name the focus of a part of the text, they also lure the reader to read on.

As you read this unit, you will undoubtedly stop and think to yourself, time and again, this sounds more like the work of a reader than a writer. In fact, your children *will* be doing some reading work in writing workshop; much of what we envision writers doing throughout this unit comes from what they have learned to do as readers. It shouldn’t surprise you, then, that as your writers craft and create informational texts using various text structures, features, and elaboration to convey their knowledge, they’ll actually be doing this work as readers, too. For example, the Common Core State Standards expect second grade students to “ask and answer who, what, where, when, why, and how questions to understand key details in a text” (RI 2.1). A big part of what students will do during this unit, then, is consider how to address these questions for readers in their informational texts.

As the unit draws to a close, you’ll teach children how to prepare their books for presentation at the class Expert Fair by considering word choice and how their writing sounds when read aloud, by rehearsing their presentations with partners, and by fixing up their writing to make it easy to read. At the fair itself, each second grader might hold court in a different corner of the gym or cafeteria, teaching a different small group of visitors about his or her topic of expertise. The opportunity to present their work conveys to children that they are writing for a real, live audience. Your class will leave this unit with the knowledge that informational texts are written to teach—and they will take with them a more wide-awake approach to the world around them.

Assessment

We suggest that you begin this unit by conducting an on-demand writing assessment. You can use the TCRWP's standard prompt: "Think of a topic that you've studied or know. Tomorrow, you will have an hour to write an informational (or all-about) text that teaches others interesting and important information and ideas about that topic. If you want to find and use information from a book or another outside source, you may bring that with you tomorrow. Please keep in mind that you'll have an hour to complete this."

Once writers have completed this assessment, use the TCRWP Information Writing Continuum to assess their writing. Note that level two of the continuum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards' expectations for the end of second grade. Although the teaching in this unit addresses all of these expectations, your plans for this unit and the skills you will especially highlight will depend on what you observe in your students' writing. Have students held onto what they learned and practiced in first grade as information writers? Are they able to fill pages (twelve or more lines) with ease? Do they naturally write in expository voice, leaving behind the narrative voice with which they launched the year as Small Moment writers? Are they able to sort and organize information into categories? Notice whether your children tend, for the most part, to write texts that are comparable to those ranked as Level 1 texts, or those ranked as Level 2, or whether they are writing texts that are more advanced.

Once you have determined what students are—and are not yet doing—you will be able to make plans for what to teach. Of course, your students won't all need the same teaching and therefore some of your instruction will end up being small group and one-one-one, giving you chances to give individual writers the informative feedback about concrete next-steps that research has shown has such pay off. But you will probably also see that in many ways, many of your students are similar, and that is because kids are very vulnerable to writing instruction. There will be things that few writers are doing, and chances are that they are not doing these things because they have not yet learned how.

We suggest you create a student-facing version of Level 2 of the Information Writing Continuum with your students, and then give your kids ample opportunities throughout the unit to use this version of the rubric as a springboard for reflection and goal-setting. Often, students can vastly outdo our expectations if we simply let them know that more is expected of them. Show your students texts that are like those you believe they will be able to write (calibrating your goal so that it is a stretch, but within reach for most of the class). The Common Core State Standards expect second graders to be able to focus on a topic, strengthening their writing through revision and editing with the support of adults and peers; the pieces you show them should reflect this.

You'll also want to pay close attention to the Language Common Core Standards. Notice which conventions students are using consistently, and which you will need to teach, or re-teach. You can refer to the Foundational Skills and the Language Skills sections of the Common Core to think about how well your students are progressing towards the end-of-the-year expectations. Expect, certainly, to weave some teaching of conventions of standard English grammar (L.2.1), capitalization, punctuation and spelling (L.2.2) into your instruction during this unit. In particular, you will want to focus on the use of collective nouns, reflexive pronouns, irregular nouns and

verbs, on distinguishing between adjectives and adverbs, on the use of commas in greetings and closings of letters, the use of apostrophes to form contractions and frequently occurring possessives, and on generalized learned spelling patterns. Refer to the Spelling section at the end of this unit for more information about spelling assessment and instruction as well as editing work.

The formative part of your assessment will take place during conferences, of course, so you will want to pay attention to the kinds of things you notice during these quick one-on-one meetings. What you find will become yet another source of data as you revise and tweak your instructional plans for the rest of the unit and year. You may want to ask some of the following research questions in your conferences to help you gather data:

- “How are you planning to structure your book?” or “What sections are you planning for your book?”
- “What are you planning to teach on this page and what text features do you think will best teach that?”
- “How are you planning to revise this page or this part?”

As you assess your students and think about the consequent plan for the upcoming unit, double-check that you want to follow the plan of this write-up. If your students are only writing a sentence or two on a page, you may decide that the first grade information writing unit will better support them.

Bend One – Launching the Unit with Volume, Rigor, and Stamina

To launch students in this genre, remind them of all they learned while making information books in first grade. Remind them that they wrote several books on topics of their choice, which included subtopics, headings, and interesting text features. Then tell them that for the next six weeks they are going to build on all that they learned to do.

Next, ask students to generate ideas by thinking about subjects they could teach others—subjects on which they have some life experience. Once children have selected topics, they can make several title pages and flip these over quickly to fill in three-five chapter headings that loosely but effectively categorize the type of information they know about that topic. This allows them to determine how much they really have to say. Then they can repeat this process for another topic, and another, and another.

Alternatively, children could discuss with a partner all the information they know about several topics to decide which sounds like an especially good one. Encourage writers to consider what sorts of resources they could consult to research their topics. Even if they already know a lot about something, there is always more to learn. Research needn’t mean only consulting books. If a child considers writing about fish that are excellent swimmers, she might gather information by observing her own fish as it swims in the tank, or by visiting a pet store. Engaging in research about a topic children know well gives them practice gathering information about a topic (CCSS W 2.8) before researching unknown topics.

These are all just optional ways your children might generate ideas for writing. Students could use one of these strategies many times over, or none. The important thing is that students

generate ideas for information writing, and some momentum to write about those ideas, and that they start writing on the very first day of this unit. By week's end, expect your second grade writers to have several titles, tables of contents, and booklets written.

If you have students who struggle to come up with topics, rather than hovering over them, suggesting topic after topic, we encourage you to cluster these "stuck" writers into a small group. Give them a quick strategy to try (perhaps eliminating choice in the interest of momentum) and then get them working in pairs to quickly generate some possible topics and tables of contents together. Remember that the point of this unit isn't that children pick the most glamorous topics—it's that they learn various ways to structure and write about a topic so that it instructs others. E.B. White, one of the most famous writers in the world, has written whole essays on warts, chickens, and commas. No topic comes with ready-made interest—instead, authors make a topic interesting. The small group work you do with these writers will provide the guidance and support they need to focus on topics and strengthen their writing (CSSS W 2.5).

By the second day in this unit, your students will each have chosen several topics as well as developed tables of contents for their topics. Now you will want to help each child make a rough plan for how his or her books will go. Encourage children to write more than one version of the table of contents. You may ask students to touch the lines on their tables of contents and to write-in-the-air how their chapters might go, and then to rethink that plan, and rewrite-in-the-air new plans. Writers can do this multiple times, while you, meanwhile, offer yet more tips that set them up for writing well-organized texts (CCSS W 2.5).

Often the logic that kids use first when writing information books is "chaining"; they come up with subtopics that fit (somewhat loosely) under a broad topic. For example, a child who is writing a book about second grade might choose the writing workshop as one chapter, a best friend as a second, and the room arrangement as a third. Or she might write a book about second grade in which each chapter is the name of a different kid in her class. In both cases, she will have chosen a wide terrain! You might teach her (and other children with this tendency) to zoom in on a more specific, focused topic. Instead of writing about all of New York City, for example, a child might write about a few places to visit in New York, or the NYC subway system, or Central Park.

We suggest you use your own informational text to show children different ways writers might divide a topic into sub-topics. Perhaps your topic is goldfish. Demonstrate how you might create chapters that tell all about the lifestyle of your goldfish—what it eats, how it sleeps, its movement. Alternatively, you could write about goldfish sequentially, telling about baby goldfish in the first chapter, mating goldfish in the second, and old goldfish in the third. The class can then do similar work with many of one another's topics, until they grasp the principle behind this work. Of course, children will worry as they do this—what if I don't have anything to say about some of these sub-topics? Teach them to begin by writing the sections on which they do have expertise and that soon, you will teach them how to gather information about anything.

Because information writing is all about writing in ways that reach (and teach) an audience, it is important that you talk about the Expert Fair often, and emphasize the audience that will attend the fair. Teach children to think about what the audience might want to learn, to anticipate what

questions the audience might have. This will influence the decisions your students to make as they plan, write, and revise their pieces.

Next, you will teach children to look over each of their planned chapters and to ask of each one, "What kind of writing will this be?" so that they can gather the kind of paper they need. A chapter on "How to Get a Puppy" is How-to writing. A chapter on "When I Got My Puppy" is narrative writing, and will require one to three pages of story-writing paper. "Take Good Care of Your Puppy!" is persuasive writing. Once children have labeled the kind of text each chapter will be, they'll construct a booklet full of paper to reflect their plans.

Remind children who work quickly enough to have additional time for planning that it is valuable to study texts that resemble those they aim to write, asking, "What is the main way that this kind of text seems to go? What do I notice about this genre of informational writing? What's different about this kind of writing in comparison with narrative writing?"

This work—of planning information books—is complex. You'll quickly see that while writers will do best making a fairly simple plan and then diving into writing, others will benefit from learning some more complex ways to plan the structure of their books. Either way, be sure that children do not plan for their writing for a whole sequence of days. It is unlikely that a seven-year-old will be able to devote more than two days to writing and revising a table of contents, and making paper choices.

During this first bend of the unit, teach children that writers of information books need to be flexible as they write. Sometimes they discover that their book needs a new kind of chapter. If so, they revise their table of contents.

At the end of your first week (or so) your second grade writers will have produced several booklets with titles and tables of contents. Some writers may have a well-developed book with several chapters written. Some may have several books that are semi-developed, with perhaps a more developed chapter or two. Children's chapters will vary in length from many lines to several pages. You can expect that most writers will be able to produce about one booklet per day. As writers finish books, teach them to move on to another book from their list of ideas, to pick a chapter to begin, and to start again.

Bend Two – Information Writers Teach More on Each Page and in Every Book

In this next bend, you will continue to channel your writers to move through the process of choosing a topic, planning, rehearsing, and drafting long and strong. Your teaching, however, will shift toward lifting the level of the work; you will encourage students to write new books that are more elaborated, and to revise previously written books likewise. Right from the start, ask children to each choose a "star book"—one that they will come back to again and again as they learn revision moves. This is not to say that they won't be revising their other books during this time—they will! But their star book will be the one they will publish and celebrate at the end of this bend.

The amount of time your writers spend on their star book depends on their stamina. If they make one revision and run out of steam, they can return to their other books and try the same strategy

in those for repeated practice. Encourage your writers to decide for themselves when to work on their star book, and when to shift to another book.

Encourage writers to write up a storm. The idea isn't that the whole class moves in sync from one chapter to the next. Instead, on one day, some children may start and finish four chapters. Another child, producing just as much text, might write just one chapter, but it could be a very long one. Keep in mind that your students should be able to write something like 20-30 sentences a day, which would equate to four to five pages with five to six sentences on each page.

Once children have written for a day or two, study their work to decide what instruction you'll give the whole class, and what instruction you'll reserve for small groups. You might look first at the organizational structure of students' writing—as you can be sure some children will find this a struggle. If many of your students have created a hodgepodge of information, the last thing you want to do is to teach them to elaborate, to write more. Rather, you will focus first on explaining the importance of organization. Depending on how many of your students need this help, you might teach a minilesson or a small group session on rereading writing for sense. Show children how to reread a section and to then ask themselves, "Does everything go here, or does some of what I have written go on another page, or outside this book altogether?" Next, you could teach a lesson on how to plan a chapter more carefully, perhaps by jotting a list of what kind of information goes into the chapter, and what kind does not. Another strategy you can teach is to revise with scissors and tape, cutting out sentences that do not go, and taping back together ones that do. Children can look at a chapter just as they have looked at the book as a whole, thinking, "What will the table of contents be for this one chapter?" This sort of revision work is instrumental to second graders' ability to strengthen their writing (CCSS W 2.5).

Once children have a sense of organization, you'll of course then want to teach them to elaborate, and more specifically, to use sources to defend their claims, discussing the relationship between the evidence and the claim. Help students know the value of specific, detailed factual evidence that supports whatever they have said. So if a child writes, "We learn a lot of things in the writing workshop," then that child needs would need to include specific information about what he learns in writing workshop; perhaps he'll tell about the different kinds of writing taught in writing workshop, or the editing work, or some strategies he has learned for writing more powerful pieces. Help children value quotations, numbers, and specific examples. If a writer has written, "Dogs eat a lot," the text is infinitely more effective if she follows this with, "Last week, we went through three small bags of dog food in just one week."

Of course, once a writer has produced evidence, it is important to talk about that evidence, linking it to the claim. Explain to children that citing and discussing evidence is almost like having a partnership conversation, only instead of talking to a person, they are talking to the page. Provide scaffolds for such thinking-on-the-page by giving them a list of thought prompts such as, "This is important because...", "You might be surprised to learn that...", "This shows that...", "I used to not realize that..., but now I have found that...", "The thing I am realizing about this is...", "The surprising thing about this is...", and "Notice that..."

Asking “who, what, where, when, and why” questions (CCSS RI 2.1) as they write their own texts can also lead students to elaborate more in their writing. Thinking especially, “Why is this important?” sets children up to move beyond recording information to make inferences. As children elaborate on their ideas, these will change and of course it is likely that they may need to rethink some of their chapter titles. The goal is for students to take ownership of the process of writing and for them to be deeply engaged in thinking analytically and purposefully about their writing, work that invariably moves them toward levels three and four of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK). As they do this work, children should be writing at a fast pace, trying to get down as much as possible onto the page, generating more and more thinking.

After four days of writing fast and furiously, you can expect your children to have written at least four multi-page chapters, and many of them will have been revised extensively. The writing they have done will still leave lots of room for revision. Certainly, plans for books will change as students work on them. And once children have written a lot, you'll need to remind them to think again about organization. They can return to all the work you taught earlier, rereading their writing to see when things are jumbled and then engaging in the hands-on revision work to categorize their information. Show children examples of chapters that are in fact two or three chapters and model how to separate these.

Of course, there are other reasons to stretch out a portion of text than to say more. Another purpose is setting up a reader to envision. Teach children that they can use some of the same strategies they used during the Realistic Fiction unit to help readers envision. For example, writers of All-about books “show” rather than “tell” in much the same way that fiction writers do. Nonfiction writers use examples, often written in little scenes, to help readers visualize information. Nonfiction writers also use comparisons to help readers picture things. A child might write, “A cartwheel is a fun, easy trick to do in gymnastics. A cartwheel is like making your body into a pinwheel. You spin upside down and right side up.” Or “A butterfly uses its proboscis to suck the nectar out of a flower. The proboscis is like a straw. It's like the butterfly is sipping nectar out with a straw!”

Although it is not a second grade expectation, the Common Core State Standards do emphasize that as kids grow in their acquisition and use of vocabulary (RI 2.4), they should be able to incorporate a range of general academic and domain specific words—the lingo of the field—into their writing. Help children to do this even when they are not entirely sure they are using the new terminology well. Approximation is the first step to learning. Moreover, some of your students are ready to take on more complex informational writing techniques.

Then, too, you will want to help writers include transitional phrases to help guide readers, and language such as “most,” “some,” and “for example”—which will support their familiarity with standardized testing language in third grade. Using transition words to show connection between parts is an important skill that is highlighted by the Common Core in later grades, and teaching it now will help your second graders to make deeper connections between pieces of information. You might also teach kids to create more sophisticated sentence structures by using prepositions such as “beside,” “during,” and “on.”

A major shift in the Common Core Standards for information writing from first to second grade is that second grade writers are expected to introduce (not just name) a topic, and to provide a concluding statement or section at the end (not just provide a sense of closure).

You may be surprised at the suggestion to teach introductions and conclusions so far along in the unit. We suggest this progression for two reasons. The first is that writers often get stymied when they draft introductions before drafting the main sections of a book. The introduction forecasts how the book will go, and often kids feel they cannot make changes if they have already drafted an introduction that suggests the book will go a certain way. The other reason is that teaching introductions and conclusions simultaneously allows you to point out the similarities between these sections and gives kids a platform for sharing the ideas they have generated about the information as they wrote and revised chapters.

Many teachers find that writing an introduction in which the writer works to rally interest among readers, actually generates interest and investment in the topic in the *writer* too. Show writers ways that authors of published books have written their introductions. Some writers, for example, tell the story of when they first became interested in the topic, and then what they did that kindled that interest. Note that such a chapter has an organizational structure that is a common one in informational writing. The author traces the story of her study, and does so in a way that brings readers along on that same journey.

Then again, a writer might address the reader directly, asking questions such as, "Have you ever stopped to think about... Every time you do..., you are... Did you know that...? It is also true that..." Then, having provoked readers' interest, this writing might launch into an overview of the topic, which outlines the book, following its sequence. For example, if the book teaches readers about a writing workshop, the introduction could quickly preview first the minilesson, then writing time, then partners, then the share. Or it could be organized to teach first about narrative writing, then about All-about writing. Either way, the introduction could follow the structure of the book.

There are lots of other ways that the introduction can be organized, and you'll want to share examples of especially well-written ones. When you do this, you'll be setting children up to write with voice from the start, and to remember that information writing is not just about the facts. To help students experiment writing with voice, you may want to encourage them to try alternate drafts to their introduction. It will help, too, that because your writers have various book topics and titles, they can try out different sorts of introductions in different books, making sure to review each book to include introductions.

Next you could turn to conclusions. Teach your second graders that their concluding section is their final opportunity to get readers to care about the information they are teaching. This is the ideal section for writers to share some of the ideas and opinions they have been growing about their topics. Also teach writers that they should revisit or summarize some of the most important information from the text so that readers remember the main points.

At this point in the unit, you might teach your kids that writers reread drafts, looking for missing pieces, for claims that they haven't yet supported, for questions readers will have that have yet to be answered. Writers ask, "Are some of my chapters a lot shorter than others? Where could I get

more information to add to that chapter?" and "Is there a chapter missing?" and "What will readers ask, that I haven't answered? What parts of this will be confusing to readers?" These questions sometimes just lead to revision or to adding on, but other times they provoke research. Partnerships will be a particularly supportive structure at this point in the unit. Partners can help to clarify information from the speaker or the text (CCSS SL 2.1-3). Set partners up to read each other's work, to ask each other questions, and to point out parts that don't totally make sense. Partnership work also builds more of a sense of community and real life purpose for writing.

Bend Three – Writers Edit, Fancy-Up, and Publish Their Writing so That It Teaches in Clear and Exciting Ways

In every unit of study, you will want to coach children to use whatever editing strategies they know, right from the start. While it is still early in your second grade year, your students are not new to editing. In addition to what you taught them earlier this year, they will also bring their skills from kindergarten and first grade. The Common Core State Standards highlight this part of the writing process: "With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing" (W 2.5). As your students prepare for their first "formal" round this unit of editing and publishing, you can be fairly heavy-handed with the editing moves that you teach. A helpful chart could list editing non-negotiables, such as capital letters, ending punctuation, and commas in lists. Then, when your writers edit and publish for a second time at the end of the unit, they can take more ownership of this part of the writing process.

By this point in the year, second graders should already be in the habit of checking their writing for word wall words and spelling patterns they have been working on in word study. Near the end of the unit, you might introduce a few new editing strategies to add to their growing repertoire, such as underlining or making technical vocabulary bold. Writers may also adapt a system to showcase important vocabulary that they are trying to teach, such as putting a blue box around vocabulary text-boxes—if they made text boxes—or underlining the words and then repeating them in a simple glossary. Formatting these nonfiction features will help your children learn to recognize and use them in the books they read, and will also give them a sense of being real authors.

As your writers get their pages ready, they'll be ready to make front and back covers for their books. This is an opportunity to again study mentor texts, and to work on persuasive writing skills. Your young writers will love to write back cover blurbs that persuade reader to choose their book. "Read this book if you want to be an expert at soccer!" or "Sharks can be our friends! Famous author Carly Smith explains the truth about sharks." You might create a word bank of words that often appear on the backs of nonfiction books, such as "surprising," "famous," "exciting," "thrilling," "find out," "explore."

Then, on to the front cover. Your writers can probably do more than write the title. They can think carefully about the colors and picture they will put on the cover, and how those will influence the reader—just as the back covers of books they pick up influence them. Again, be sure to return to those mentor texts. It doesn't really matter that your writers accomplish the same techniques that published authors do, so much as that they begin to read alertly, and write like authors who expect to be read. This is a terrific opportunity to get your children to notice how

the books they read work. Kids who have chosen their own cover images carefully, study the covers of nonfiction more carefully; kids who have made vocabulary boxes actually use the ones they encounter in the books they read.

Certainly you will continue to teach children how to punctuate in powerful ways and to use commas strategically in their writing. You will probably want to create a chart that lists the four or five main things you hope your entire class will check for in their writing. In addition to this class editing checklist, you might even create individualized editing checklists for those who could benefit from such a tool. Teach kids specific strategies for checking their work, like pointing under each word, or reading aloud to a partner as he or she reads along.

At the end of the first publishing in this unit, give your writers an opportunity to share their writing with an authentic audience. Children can teach others what they know about their topic. The Speaking and Listening standards specifically address presentation skills. Every celebration you do in your classroom is a time to work on these skills. Yes, you want the time to feel celebratory, but you also want kids to know this is important, challenging, work.

Holding an Expert Fair could be the perfect platform for your writers to share their work. To prepare for this, you might use one writing workshop to teach children to rehearse a "mini-presentation" where they tell visitors the most important things about their topics, most likely their chapter titles. Students could even make presentation boards and captions, and use a pointer to present their work. In one school, a child who wrote a book about scooters set up a presentation board with photographs of herself riding her scooter, complete with captions. She even brought in her scooter, helmet and knee pads. Then, as she presented, she rode her scooter around to illustrate her points! For the Expert Fair, you could lay all your children's work out on display, complete with extensive revisions. As visitors enter the classroom, invite them to stand with individual students, and listen to their presentations. Then they could rotate around the room, so that students have several opportunities to present. Of course, you could opt to save this larger-scale celebration for the end of the unit, and instead hold a mini-Expert Fair, in which writers present just to one another.

Bend Four – Choosing an Expert Topic, Trying Out New Text Structures, and Elaborating with Well-Researched Evidence

To launch bend four, ask writers to revisit the student-facing continuum you co-created, to study the pieces they just finished, and to set goals for themselves for the remainder of the unit. This kind of reflection not only helps kids do the challenging work described in DOK levels three and four, it also gets them to name the qualities of good information writing they are starting to master so that they bring these forward as they draft anew.

In this bend, students will study some of their all-time favorite nonfiction books and learn to write in similar ways. You'll want to spotlight a few that you know your kids love, highlighting the text structures and features that really caught your kids' attention—remind them how they loved the way those books were written, how they couldn't stop talking about the way the books looked—some had, flaps on certain pages, others required them to turn the book vertically to read particular pages. You might say, "All those books that make us go, 'Wow!'" Those books that we thought were so cool can help us write our own books!"

Then, set your writers up to notice and name the different structures of these texts in a way that sets them up to try using the same structures in the books they are writing. You might ask children, "Why do you think the author wrote the book in this way?" or perhaps, "How does structuring the book as question and answer help us understand more about this particular topic?" Be on the lookout for books about the same topic that are structured in different ways because these can help you teach your students to inquire about the nature and power of different approaches. For the first few days in this bend, you'll want to highlight a few ways some of your favorite nonfiction authors have structured their books, and, of course, record these on a chart. Demonstrate how some authors organize their books using questions and answers to write about insects and bugs while another author uses compare and contrast to teach about animals in the wild. Perhaps you'll point out that in a book like *Bugs! Bugs! Bugs!* the text is organized into different sections of information for each insect: praying mantis, wood ants, and stink bugs.

Then, channel your writers to choose a topic that fascinates them, as this will be their "umbrella" topic for this bend. Then they will decide on different structures they could try using to tell about that topic. For example, a child who decides to write about traveling might first try writing chapters or sections that pose questions, like "What do you need to pack to go on a trip?" or "How do you get ready for an airplane ride?" Next, the child might compare and contrast traveling to a faraway place for a vacation with staying at home for a vacation. As your children consider each possibility for how to structure their texts, teach them to consider the pros and cons of using a particular structure for a particular topic. Suggest that they ask themselves, "What will I be able to put in my book if I write it this way? What will I have to leave out if I write it this way?" Of course, the best way to figure out which structure is best is to simply try different ones out and see!

It may take children one to three days to quickly draft an entire book, with the emphasis on getting the words down, moving on to a new idea as soon as they've finished. At the start of this bend, students should be writing many books and writing with lots of volume. One way to teach kids to elaborate and write with volume is to remind them to use accountable talk prompts, such as "This is important because...", or "This makes me wonder...", or "As I write this, I am realizing that...", or "The surprising thing about this is..." As students draft, remind them that they are writing to fill a particular audience's mind with knowledge and to move them to say, "Wow!" just as they do when reading their favorite authors' texts.

As soon as your writers finish drafting one book using a particular structure, channel them to start another book about the same topic, this time with a different structure. Depending on the stamina of your writers and the length of time you are devoting to this bend, you'll need to make a decision about when to set up your writers to choose one, special book that will be the book they will share at the celebration. The remaining strategies you teach will be revision strategies, aimed at supporting students as they make these books even better. Of course, in any given session, your second graders can always go back and revise other books they have written if they run out of steam while revising their chosen one.

As students embark on revision, you'll want to remind them of all they've already learned about how information writers revise, and also channel them to do more complex, sophisticated

revision than they have done previously. Information authors know that it isn't what you start out knowing about your topic, it is what you learn and apply to your understanding of your topic that makes writing informed and focused. Second grade writers need opportunities to participate in research (shared) on topics and to write about their findings (CCSS W 2.7); this portion of the bend is an opportunity for them to do just that. You might teach them to rely on artifacts, photographs, and even interviews as they continue to add information to their books. You could ask that students bring in a couple of artifacts that are essential to their topics, creating expertise shoebox collections. A child who might be writing about dogs may fill his box with a leash, a collar, a bone, or a brush. If the artifact a child selects fits into an existent chapter in his book, he can work the artifact into that chapter. If an artifact doesn't "go" into any chapter, the child can write about it on a separate page titled, aptly, "Artifact" and then find a place for this new information later. Or he may create a new chapter if the artifact feels important enough to stand on its own.

Teach kids how to study these artifacts closely, observe them, ask questions, and try to come up with answers. Some of the artifacts are likely to remind children of experiences that they have had that relate to their expert project topic. They might want to write "small moment chapters" for their books, by thinking of something they experienced that fits with their topic and then writing the moment bit by bit, in sequence. You can show students examples of narrative writing (stories) that incorporate information that teaches about the topic, such as the book *Pumpkins* by Ken Robbins, or the narrative sections of some of Gail Gibbons's books. Then too, the artifacts will trigger a variety of new chapters. A dog's leash can result in a diagram of the different parts of the leash, with several pages about each of the parts and their purposes.

As children begin to declare their books done, be sure that you can actually see signs of their revision work. A complete piece may have sentences crossed out, flaps added on to make room for more writing, labels added to diagrams, headings written and rewritten, some chapters added in and others removed. Teach children to reread and fix up their work to make sure it all makes sense, too, crossing out parts that "don't go" and fixing parts that are confusing. Children might need to rework chapters (starting fresh sometimes) to draw out the main idea they are trying to show. Partners often help each other write with more precision, or to decide whether they need more information or ideas in their chapters. Partners can also teach a chapter of their books to each other, checking for clarity, and gaps that need to be filled. Children should review their tables of contents, too, to be sure these reflect their final chapter selection, and decide whether they want to add a glossary of terms.

Bend Five – Writers Edit to Prepare for Publishing

During this final portion of the unit, children will again choose one "star book" that they will take all the way through to publication. Of course, they will continue to revise and edit (CCSS W 2.5) other books in their folder for repeat practice of specific skills and strategies.

Now is the time for children to study their writing, making sure it contains enough information and is clear to readers. Children may look over their chapters and realize that they need to revise their headings, rewrite particular ones, or rearrange sections to support their readers. Perhaps a student is writing a compare-contrast book about her country of origin. Most of the chapters may compare the country of origin with the United States. But as the child looks over her book, she

realizes that some chapters don't follow that structure. This could be because she got tired or couldn't maintain the structure across the entire book. Find out the thoughts and intentions the writer had and teach her how to solve the problem. Usually, this means that you need to think about how *you* would solve this problem and then create a strategy for the student by breaking the work down into smaller steps.

Students may also work in partnerships to lift the level of their writing and help each other find places where they need to add more information or say more inside a particular chapter. You might teach students to listen to their partner's work with a specific lens in mind. Does each chapter have enough information? Do some chapters have too much information and others not enough? Do some chapters not fit with the structure you have chosen? How could you rewrite some chapters so they match the structure you have chosen?

As children edit their books, teach them to reread with an eye for writing more complex sentences, as at this time of year, students can and should be moving beyond writing simple sentences. Teach them how to write complex, compound sentences with clauses and more sophisticated punctuation. For example, you could teach them how to combine elements in a list. Focus your editing work with students to meet their needs. You could teach children to go on a proper-noun hunt in their books, or to edit for spelling of particular vowel patterns.

At the end of this unit, celebrate the challenging, intellectual work of writing nonfiction books. You could ask students to share the mentor texts that inspired them to write their books and to talk about the reasons why. Students might talk about the text structure and craft of their final published piece and what inspired those choices, aligning with the emphasis on authorial purpose found throughout the Common Core State Standards. Because you have been teaching children to consider their audience throughout this unit, invite them to now think carefully about who they would like to invite to the celebration. Children could even write letters of invitation to people they select. Perhaps they will invite another second grade classroom, or the administration of the school, or a younger group of children. You'll have to decide if each child chooses an individual or two that he or she would like to invite, or if you will choose the audience together as a class.

Spelling

Your writers have been growing and so is the number of words and spelling features they have been learning in word study which means they have a great deal of knowledge to use when spelling. You've taught and reinforced problem-solving strategies such as spelling in syllables or moving across the word in parts using what they know about words and how they work. You will continue to support this work. Children have become more attentive to vowel sounds, especially long vowels, and tried out ways to visually represent those sounds. Many are making approximations for these long vowel sounds, at times attaching a vowel marker that may not be accurate, e.g., writing "cote" for "coat." The important thing is that they recognize the long vowel sound and are trying to represent it, in this case with the silent 'e' as the vowel marker, a pattern you've likely been teaching over the past couple of months. This means that you will be moving toward teaching other long vowel spellings and students will need to learn and rely on their understanding of the different visual patterns for the long vowel sounds (CCSS L2.2d). This will require a great deal of practice during word study and then careful and thoughtful spelling work during writing time.

Using Knowledge of Spelling Patterns and Monitoring Along the Way

You will probably be studying one vowel sound at a time and looking at the ways a sound is represented. For example, you will study long 'o' words that have the silent 'e' as the vowel marker as well as the 'a' as a vowel marker as in the vowel team 'oa.' It is at this point that you will teach and expect writers to write with more accuracy, relying on the anchor words for these patterns from word study and trying the word a few different ways, if needed, to see which spelling looks right. This requires more work on remembering patterns than children have done before. In the past your writers relied more heavily on sound, writing a letter or letters that could make that sound, even if it wasn't spelled conventionally. Now, isolating the sounds, especially for vowels, should be easier work, and the challenge will be to determine the correct spelling for those sounds.

You'll want to demonstrate how you monitor your spelling as you write, rereading along the way to check the middle of words especially. You can set your writers up to practice this through mid-workshop teaching points and share sessions either on their own or with partners. This is also a good time to get children to become more reflective about the decisions they are making about their writing, and this is true for spelling, too. You might have partners find words with long vowels or other hard-to-spell words and then explain how they decided to spell those words the way they did. They might compare it to another word with that spelling or explain how they tried a few different ways. These reflections will help them be aware of the spelling work they are doing, as many times children who are strong with decoding words and spelling words do the work so automatically that they are unaware of how they can use this knowledge of words when they get to an unfamiliar word. This reflection helps them problem-solve words with more intention.

Using High Frequency Words

The word wall is growing. This means your students are learning more words as you support them in remembering and quickly writing words that occur frequently in the texts they write and read. It also means that in order for the wall to be a tool, they need to know how to navigate it quickly so that they don't searching too long for a word they want to write. Hopefully during word you have given students opportunities to use the word wall in different ways so that they now have a general sense of where words are located. Show them how they can locate the word quickly by going to the area of the wall they remember seeing it, use the first parts of words to help them find the letter the word is under and then find the word, making sure it looks like the one they want to write (as there are probably multiple words under certain letters at this point). Also know that some writers, if not all, may need personal, individualized word walls. Some children are still working on more basic high frequency words, so searching a word wall filled with words that are above where he or she is ready to learn is not productive. It might be that you teach writers to warm up before writing by reading their words walls three or four times so that they are reminded of the words they know or are learning and can draw on this when they go to write words.

Editing

This is a good time of year to focus on language conventions such as capitalization of names, of places, and products (CCSS L2.2a) and to add this to the editing checklist your students have

been using when they publish. As students write informational texts, they learn to give specific information, including names of people, places, and things. For example, instead of simply saying that dogs eat different kinds of dog food, a writer can name the brand of food her dog eats. This is a great opportunity to do research as well; have children find these names at home and then write them with accurate capitalization in their books.

As writers edit for spelling make sure, too, that they use what they have learned from word study to be sure their words look right. They should have their word study notebooks or charts out to use as reminders of what they should be doing accurately in their writing. It can be helpful not only to teach students to reread and edit as they write their pages during the unit, but to use their writing folders during word study activities to support the transfer of knowledge from one context to the next. If you are studying a particular spelling pattern in word study, students can look through their folders to find places where they used that pattern correctly. In places where they didn't, they can then self-correct.

Unit Four – Opinion Writing: Writing About Reading

January/February

Overview

Kids naturally speak in persuasive ways. They give their opinions about the foods they eat, the movies they watch, and the video games they play. They argue for a later bedtime, a trip to Disneyland, and the opportunity to get a new puppy. It's a small step, then, to teach children to write opinions about books. This unit builds on the first-grade unit on persuasive reviews and stories, although children who bypassed that unit will not find this unduly challenging. In this new unit of study, you'll launch your second graders into writing about reading. The unit will have a full-on energy that comes with new and ambitious work, while holding to the vision of seven-year-olds tackling writing to think. The unit tackles two kinds of opinion writing: opinion writing about stories, and opinion writing about information. The major structure that you'll teach children within opinion writing will be compare-contrast, as this structure leads children to state clear opinions and to back these up with some evidence, two important skills that will be forefront on the list of expectations as children move on to third grade and beyond.

There's another reason this unit is so important. In creating the ten College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing which outline what students are expected to be able to do upon graduation from high school, the Common Core places the ability to write argument pieces first. In the Appendix of the Common Core, the authors cite research showing that the ability to write arguments is essential to success in college and the workforce, devoting time and space to explaining "The Special Place of Argument in the Standards" (CCSS, Appendix A, p. 24). Strange as it may seem to consider this all now when you are working with seven and eight year olds, opinion writing directly leads to the ability to write arguments so this unit, along with other opportunities that you provide to your students to write about their opinions on topics and texts, is critical.

The Common Core places new demands on second graders in opinion writing but expects much of the work second graders do in this genre to be similar to the work they did in first grade—but with increased sophistication. In first grade, your students were expected to "write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure." Now, in second grade, in addition to introducing the topic they are writing about, your students must also "introduce the book they are writing about" (rather than only name it), "supply reasons that support the opinion," "use linking words (e.g. *because*, *and*, *also*) to connect opinion and reasons" and "provide a concluding statement or section." These shifts—introducing the book they are writing, supplying more than one supportive reason, linking parts together and providing a longer, more formalized ending—are the areas to which you will want to devote key attention.

Unpacking this, here are the key points. Your students will need to now create beginnings to their pieces which do not name their opinion immediately, but rather introduce readers to the content of their books. They will also need to recognize what reasons are supportive of their opinion and which less so. In addition, they will need to create a sense of cohesion within their work. And they will need to start seeing a larger meaning to their pieces in order to be able to

Unit Four – Opinion Writing: Writing About Reading

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

come up with endings that provide more than a sense of closure—ones that are full statements of conclusion, or sections even. If you look closely at the second grade expectations—more extensive introduction, multiple supportive reasons, parts linked together, and longer more formalized conclusion—you will note that these new expectations will directly lead to students later writing formal essays and that each expectation will become a section of that essay—intro, body paragraphs which are linked together, conclusion.

This work particularly tackles Common Core Writing Standard 2.1 (opinion writing) and also begins to gesture toward developing Writing Standard 9, which expects students to draw on evidence from texts (beginning in Grade Four). If that sounds like heady intellectual work, it is! Bear in mind though, that in second graders' writing, this work will sound like this: 'In the *Frog and Toad* story "Alone," Toad is more needy than Frog...' That is, your children will state opinions and cite evidence from texts they can read and understand, in ways that seven-year-olds can process and deliver.

As you familiarize yourself with the standards, keep in mind the ones for production and distribution of writing as well as for language. As mentioned in calendars for previous units, in first grade your students were expected to "with guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers" (W 1.6). This expectation remains the same in second grade. In addition, last year students were expected to "with guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed," (W 1.5). Now, in second grade students must be able to "with guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing" (W 2.5). This means that students need to have multiple strategies for revising and editing, as well as the know-how to *use* these strategies to strengthen their writing. They must have some sense of what their writing needs and be able to discuss a certain strategy. This is also what is required in DOK Level 4.

The Language Standards include five major new expectations of second graders in demonstrating command of conventions of standard written English. Students are expected to "capitalize holidays, product names, and geographic names" (L 2.2a), "use commas in greetings and closings of letters" (L 2.2b), "use an apostrophe to form contractions and frequently occurring possessives" (L 2.2c), "generalize learned spelling patterns when writing words," (L 2.2d), "consult reference materials, including beginning dictionaries as needed to check and correct spellings" (L 2.2e). In addition, students are expected to do all of the work they learned in first grade and kindergarten around demonstrating command of conventions of language. It is worth talking to your colleagues who teach previous grades about editing checklists, charts, etc. that they have used and creating tools to remind students of what they *already* should know to do (use ending punctuation for sentences, use commas in dates, etc.) Refer to the Spelling section located after Bend IV for more specific information on spelling assessment and instruction for the next two months.

Another invaluable resource for this unit is the book *Writing About Reading*, which will be one of the second grade units that is part of the forthcoming series, *Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grade by Grade* (Calkins et al., 2013). This text will give you more detailed descriptions about minilessons, conferences, small groups, and ways to create more varied

teaching opportunities across a session. Both this calendar as well the book will show you ways to support not only the Common Core State Standards, but also high levels of DOK—with a tremendous emphasis on teaching for transference and on applying skills, within this unit and into other content areas.

Assessment

You'll probably conduct a quick on-demand initial writing assessment before launching this unit. You can use a general prompt, found on our website (www.readingandwritingproject.com) to learn what your students remember about opinion writing from prior instruction. You could invite students to write an opinion about either a character or a story they've read. Either way, once children have completed the task, you'll gather up their writing and assess how they refer to specific examples or parts of the story, and/or how they support their opinion with evidence. Use an assessment tool to determine your students' areas of strength, as well as areas you will need to strengthen through whole class instruction as well as small group work. You will find the TCRWP's *Opinion Continuum* (available on our website) useful as you assess your students' current evidence-based opinion writing. Remember, most of your students will enter around a Level 1 and 2 on the continuum. Don't despair if they seem to refer to evidence that was not in the story, or if they don't state a very clear opinion. In just a few weeks, you'll see noticeable improvement in your young writers' capacities. The end of the year benchmark is a Level 2 for second grade, so you will want to study Levels 2 and 3 in more detail and depth.

As the unit progresses, you may decide to conduct a few different formative assessments, to guide your decisions and directions throughout the unit. Use your conferring and small group time to research your students' decisions, abilities to elaborate, and knowledge of organization to guide some of the instruction that will take place in this unit.

This unit is an extended one, about six weeks long. Be sure at the end of your unit to conduct a summative assessment, with the same prompt you gave at the onset of the unit, to assess how students have grown and what other skills you'll spotlight going forward. While this is the sole unit in opinion writing for second graders, it is not the only time of the year when your students will be using this genre to communicate and write. Take what you learn from this unit of study and continue coaching and supporting students to write in this genre, across the day in reading, science, and social studies. That is, as you plan your instruction and assessments, think not only about what you'll teach over the course of the next six weeks, but over the course of the year.

Bend One – Playing with Writing About Reading

To begin this unit, the very first thing you will do is to get your kids writing as a way of *thinking* about their books. You might say, “You know the other day I was listening to your partnerships talking about books and I noticed something very grown-up. I heard some of you being a little unsure. Some of you were saying things like, “I don’t know if I agree with Poppleton in this part... At first I was on his side because Cherry Sue was inviting him over too much and I was getting annoyed right along with him, but when he turned the hose on her it was just so mean. I’m not sure what to think?” You know when you are a little kid, you think it is *so* important to be right that sometimes you don’t *consider* all the possibilities. You just have an idea like “Poppleton is good.” And then your thinking stops. But *now* what I am noticing is a whole new, more grown-up way of talking. You all were really *thinking* about your ideas and *considering*

Unit Four – Opinion Writing: Writing About Reading

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

them. This is what scholars do—they take an idea and they play with it. They think of all the ways it can be true and then they try to think of all the ways it isn't true and *then* they start to form their opinions and ideas out of that thoughtfulness and consideration. This month we are all going to have more grown-up ideas and we are going to start with what most of you have already done in your partnerships—we are going to be unsure.”

On the very first day of this unit, then, you will invite your students to read during writing workshop and to do so a little differently. Suggest that they read their books, Post-its in hand, and push themselves to write “maybe” Post-its. Model this yourself, showing them that as you read Frog and Toad’s “The List,” when you get a thought or idea you record it on a Post-it, but this time, you begin the thought with the word “maybe”: “*Maybe* Frog is just doing the things on Toad’s list to be nice?” By simply putting the word “maybe” at the beginning of their ideas, you encourage students to think more deeply about their ideas—to raise questions or weigh possibilities. This sort of thinking will get children to push past banal, all-or-nothing statements like, “Poppleton is nice” to more contemplative shades-of-grey thinking, like, “Maybe Poppleton is more than just nice? Maybe he’s also sometimes impatient?”

Once children are writing Post-its that leave open the possibility for opposing or evolving ideas, show them how to explore these ideas further. This time you’ll have a full-on writing workshop, but your students will have their book baggies right next to them. You may decide to put out some paper that gives children different ways to tease out these ideas. Most simply, you may provide paper that has a box for a Post-it and then a lot of lines. Encourage kids to use these lines as they choose. You might say, “Only *you* can push your own ideas, so pick a Post-it from your book that you think is an interesting one. Then place it at the top of the page and push yourself to write more about it. Write anything that comes to mind and when you have nothing more to write start asking yourself questions to help you write more. You can ask yourself questions like:

- Why is this idea important?
- Where is my idea true in the book?
- Is this always true?

And once you’ve asked yourself those questions and written down your thinking, you can give yourself some prompts like:

- What I was really trying to say....
- That is...
- In other words...
- ‘I’m starting to think that...’
- This reminds me of...’

Of course, this will take a little while for children to do well, so you’ll want to continually reassure them that this is the very grown-up work of considering and thinking about stories and characters more deeply. Calling this work “grown-up” is not just a show; in fact making these choices and thinking about their ideas in a variety of ways is the definition of DOK Level 4 work, the most sophisticated, high-cognitive-demand work that we ultimately hope—and set children up—to tackle.

Give your students opportunities to try other ways to play with their ideas, too. A piece of paper with a Post-it box in addition to a few speech bubbles may spark their thinking, angling it toward the kinds of things characters say. Children can write an idea down and then search the book for character quotes that support—or don't support—their idea. Or you might make available paper with two boxes, thus pushing children to compare and/or contrast two ideas from a book. Any time a student finds another interesting way to play around with book ideas, share it with the group. Pretty soon the children will be creating their own paper and getting really good at being unsure. This is just where you want them to be because before they can have a well-thought-out opinion, they need to think—a lot. Immersing them in that kind of thinking is the spotlight of Bend One.

Bend Two – Launching Into Debates About Stories

The second bend of this unit spotlights comparative language and debate. Picture this: you've read aloud a favorite story—perhaps *Hansel and Gretel*. You put up a sentence strip, with “evil” on one end, and “good” on the other. As you read the story, children help you place Post-its with the word “father” on it, across the scale, as they debate when the father is being evil and when he seems good. You keep track of these Post-its, and at the end of the story, as you look across them, you model how you might think, debate, and then write: “In *Hansel and Gretel*, the father is more evil than good. He seems good when he is kind to his children at the beginning of the story. But then when he leads the kids into the woods, to be eaten by the witch, he seems evil. He is so evil here that I think he is mostly an evil person, even though he rescues the kids at the end.” Then you might put up another sentence strip, with the words “safe,” and “scary” on it, and invite the children to try the same kind of thinking about what kind of place the woods is in the story (CCSS RL 2.7). After their partner conversation, you might say, “Quick, write that down!” Presto, your students will have written little literary essays, in which they state an opinion and back it up with some evidence from the text! They'll also have done some compare and contrast work!

This compare and contrast work doesn't depend on reading aloud fairy tales. In fact, you'll want to be sure you don't demonstrate only on fairy tales, as your children are reading all sorts of stories, and will need to learn how to develop their thinking not only about stories of one kind. Take a familiar series, such as *Frog and Toad*, or *Judy Moody*. You might compare Frog to Toad, or Toad to Poppleton, with a scale of silly to responsible, or loyal to heartless.

As you make these comparisons, you'll notice that really, you are coaching children to compare along a scale of a particular character trait. It's not that useful, for instance, to call Toad “kind,” and Poppleton “hungry.” That kind of “comparison” is in fact a series of separate observations about each character (notice that the one about Poppleton describes his physical state, not a personality trait). To state an *opinion*, one that compares and contrasts two characters, children could make use of the words “more” or “less,” or the letters “er,” as in “Toad is more silly than Frog,” or “Cherry Sue is less explosive than Poppleton,” or “Poppleton is friendlier than Toad.”

In this bend, you'll probably, therefore, teach students to make simple and clear opinion statements in which they compare characters, places, or events in their stories: “Amber Brown is angrier than Justin about Justin moving,” or “Mercy Watson is more trouble than Clifford.” You might lead students to compare one story with the read-aloud book you are currently reading, or

with past read-alouds. If some students struggle to do this work in their own leveled texts, pull them into a small group with you, and practice some guided reading and writing with your read-aloud texts.

As students develop their opinions, teach them to go back into their stories to point to parts where they find examples to support their ideas. Teach them to include these parts in their writing, by retelling a little bit of what happens in their story, as evidence for their opinion. Watch for when kids wander from the text and invent evidence, or include evidence from a different book in a series. Remind them that they can use evidence from the pictures as well as the words in their stories.

You may find it helpful to develop systems with children for collecting and moving Post-its, in T-charts, along scales, up on the wall of the room. Tactile systems help students recall their thinking, and sort out sides of an opinion. Help them return to their Post-its and their stories, as they gather up examples to support their opinions. As students write with more evidence, you may find that many of them are ready to choose paper with more lines, and they may no longer need picture boxes. Share student work often in your lessons, shares, and mid-workshops, to give children a sense of what well-supported opinions sound like.

Bend Three – Moving to Nonfiction: Opinions About Animals, Cars, and Other Stuff!

You've undoubtedly read aloud some riveting nonfiction texts. Get those back out for this third bend, and invite your students to have opinions about what they're reading and thinking as they explore nonfiction topics. You might model with "Cheetahs are more fierce than lions," or "Cars are better than rockets for travel," returning to topics and texts that are familiar to your students.

It will be important to act as if your children are somewhat adept now at developing opinions, debating these with a partner, and backing up their ideas with real evidence from what they're reading. And in fact they should be! Hold up children's first drafts to the *Opinion Writing Continuum* again, and you should see a lot of progress since that first on-demand. Your children are ready to engage in higher-level thinking and writing work. Now is the time to set them up to do that DOK Level 4 work, in which they transfer and apply the strategies they've learned thus far to a new context.

You may find that you need to reteach some methods for gathering evidence, now that children are thinking and talking about nonfiction. Have them create t-charts, and jot details, or put Post-its on sides of the T-chart. Put up lots of examples in the room, so kids can share ideas. Encourage them to compare their topics and texts to the class's read-aloud topics and texts. Which is worse, hurricanes or tornadoes? Would an earthquake or a tsunami be worse? Would it be better to have a horse or a pig, based on what you've read? A dog or a cat? Continue to channel children to refer back to texts and to use their expert evidence as they talk and write.

Debate will be a major tool in your classroom, as you teach students to use expert language and facts to argue for gerbils versus snakes as better pets, or bees versus cockroaches as the more interesting insect. After debates, your mantra can be, "Write that down!" Your goal will be that children's somewhat informal essays now become more structured. Whereas earlier, you encouraged them to be "unsure," to pose questions, and consider various sides of things, now

Unit Four – Opinion Writing: Writing About Reading

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

you'll teach them to make their opinions crystal clear—no wishy washy “either or” stuff here! Teach them to act and sound like experts, perhaps taking on voices of those nature program narrators, to get them to really use the expert details they are learning.

Watch not only for which students are ready for paper with more lines, but also for which kids are ready to do some paragraphing, making sections for the different parts of the essay. Watch as well for which students struggle to organize their writing. Chances are that students who had difficulty categorizing in information writing will now experience some of those same struggles in persuasive compare and contrast writing.

Bend Four – Publishing and Hosting Talk-show Debate Panels

Just as students have been working on their editing skills throughout this unit and the ones preceding it, now you will teach kids how to go back, reread and edit their work, using a checklist you have been developing since the fall. Each student will also have his or her own long term editing goals. Some students might be editing by paying close attention to the use of apostrophes, while others are trying to write ending punctuation with complex sentences (CCSS LS 2.2). Be sure that your students have a chance to work on their spelling strategies and are incorporating what they are learning during word study/phonics time to their opinion pieces. Below is a section devoted to your students' developmental spelling. Remember to analyze and assess how your students are learning and acquiring new features of phonics. Writing workshop is the perfect time to determine whether students are practicing and using this new knowledge in context. This supports not only the Common Core's Language Standards (2.2d 2.2e), but also the the Reading Standards: Foundational Skills (2.3).

As you get ready to publish, be creative in giving your (now highly) opinionated writers a chance to share their voices. You may want to host a series of debates, or talk shows, or discussion panels. You may do a “meet the expert” session, where visitors can hear the expert opinions of literary critics, naturalists, and special experts. This will help to show and develop not only children's persuasive writing skills but also their presentation skills (CCSS SL 2.4, 2.5, 2.6)

You might assemble the kids' writing into a magazine, or put their work up around the school with a “join in the debate” series of bulletin boards, inviting other students to share this research and compose persuasive opinions. This is the last chance to get other students involved and to spark new interest in the texts and topics your children have become so passionate about—so make this a big deal, whatever you do!

Spelling

Attending to Pattern and Meaning When Spelling Words

As you continue to study long vowel spelling patterns including less common and ambiguous ones such as -old, -oi as well as r-influenced vowels patterns such as -ar, -are, -or, and -ore, you will continue to support this transfer of knowledge from word study to writing workshop. Children's writing folders should be part of both components of the literacy block, if not more, and you will bring in tools such as a word study notebook from word study to writing time. Remind students to use what they know about patterns in familiar words to help them spell unfamiliar words, trying out the spelling of the vowel sound a few different ways to determine which way looks right.

Unit Four – Opinion Writing: Writing About Reading

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

While focusing on pattern, know that you will need to do more work around meaning because of the number of homophones that arise during the study of long vowel patterns and when students are writing these words. For example, the vowel sounds in ‘main’ and ‘mane’ sound the same yet are spelled differently and, therefore, have different meanings. This is specific knowledge that children must study and retain so that when they are writing they can determine the meaning of the word they want to write and then refer to it to determine the correct spelling. Now, as they reread their writing, they will need to ask themselves if the words look right and if they make sense in the context of what they are writing. Spelling does involve meaning work. Children are learning this as they read, too, as they encounter homophones in their independent reading texts.

Word Walls and Other Reference Tools

Your word wall is continuing to grow with both high frequency words and anchor words for particular spelling features (highlighted in a different color or font to distinguish between these). Some high frequency words can serve this purpose as well since many do have common spelling patterns. As your instruction during word study takes a shift toward meaning with a focus on homophones—words that have the same long vowel sounds with different spellings and meanings—start recording some of these. You can do this on the word wall or on a separate wall. The important thing is that children have a chance to interact with these words, to add to the wall (or their word study notebook) as they come across them as they read and write, and that they have some sort of symbol or picture cue to remind them of the difference in meaning.

In addition to the expansion of the word wall, you may decide to introduce spelling dictionaries, if you haven’t already done so, as a way to check the spelling of unfamiliar words. Certainly by the end of second grade, you’ll want students to consult this type of reference material to check and correct spellings (CCSSL2.2e). Be careful not to let this become a practice that takes up a great deal of writing time but is instead used:

- during word study time
- when a piece is finished and they check a few words that are especially challenging
- during the final editing stage of the publication process

Editing

Chances are many children are saving all their work around language conventions for the editing stage of the writing process. While there is usually a good amount of editing to do at the end, it is important that children incorporate all that they know about spelling as they write words. They should be checking their writing after recording a word and getting into the habit of rereading entire sentences as they write. It is also important that they incorporate the conventions they have learned, on the go, such as using ending punctuation and capitalization of names of people, places, and things, specifically, products. Decide on one or two new aspects of language convention work for the next two months. One may be the work of consulting reference materials, such as the simple dictionaries as described above, and another may be making apostrophes for contractions (CCSS L2.2c), especially if you have begun studying contractions in word study.

You should have a convention checklist that has been growing across the year, and may even be individualized to support writers who are at different levels of language convention application.

Referring to this throughout a unit is important, as is the instruction during the final editing stage of the publication process. There is so much for writers to attend to even if they have been doing some monitoring as they write, and sometimes maintaining editing focus and stamina for a published piece is a challenge. Therefore, you may decide to make small versions of the checklist so that children can use one checklist for each page of their writing. Once completed, they can tape this to the back of that page. They can then do the same with their partner, which means that the checklist may have a column for the partner to use as well.

Unit Five – Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages

February/March

Overview

With winter nearly over and spring just around the corner, now is a great time Poetry is a great way to revive your writing workshop. The poetry work your children do this year will inspire in them an appreciation for the power of precise language and attention to detail. Also, it provides another genre in which students can express their knowledge, thoughts, and ideas, while honing their creative writing skills. Then too, the opportunity to write poetry draws on many of the same skills students have been developing all year in other writing genres. After all, poets plan, write with detail, revise, make reading-writing connections—the works! By writing poems, students can show off all they have learned. In this way, poetry can culminate all your students’ learning. Above all, this unit aims to give your young poets a channel for finding significance in the everyday details of their lives.

One big goal of this unit is for your young poets to write in deliberate ways that evoke powerful imagery and convey important messages. This supports the higher level strategic, analytical work that Norman Webb describes in his Depth of Knowledge (DOK). Students will have written in equally purposeful, powerful ways during the Author Mentors unit that launched their second-grade year, so this work will merely reinforce thinking that was set into motion from the very first day. To help students write with this kind of intention, you will want to read aloud (and get them to read on their own) many poems. You might start the unit with narrative poetry, drawing on poets that students know well, like Jane Yolen or Naomi Shihab Nye. During this immersion, you will want to highlight not only how poetry sounds, but also the different forms of poetry by studying the way that a variety of poems look and create sound and rhythm on the page. In this unit, then, it is essential that right from the start, children not only *write*, but also *read* poetry.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) expect that by the end of the year, second graders will be able to “Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song” (CCSS.RL.2.4). This reading standard is, of course, transferable to writing; students will study poems through these lenses in order to write their own poems, drawing on these same techniques. The application of these skills from one context to another—from reading to writing—helps to create more cognitively demanding work for students, something that Norman Webb’s DOK refers to as level four work. Another big goal in this unit, then, is helping students transfer what they notice as they read poetry to their own writing.

Another big goal of the unit is helping children write with more meaning. Even as you teach your young poets to pay close attention to objects, to study comparisons, and to write about the ordinary in extraordinary ways, you will also want to be sure that they are writing about meaningful topics. Remind your second graders to bring their lives, their knowledge, and their rich ideas about their world to the poems they are writing, so that readers will be compelled to read them.

Writing Curricular Calendar, Second Grade, 2012-2013

2

Of course, you will place a specific emphasis on the writing process during this unit as well. The Common Core State Standards specifically call upon second graders to work on revision and editing skills (W 2.5). Teach your students that just like narrative, persuasive and informational texts, poems are also revised and edited, again and again! Tell your students that it took Nikki Giovanni seventeen drafts of one of her poems before she was done. And Nikki Grimes once said, “There’s no such thing as a perfect first draft.” You will want to help your second graders understand this critical stage of the writing process throughout this unit of study so that their work is more ambitious. “If you hear, This is easy—I’m done,” you’ll need to reinforce the teaching of substantial revision. Present your students with challenges and ways to rethink their work so as to find the best sound, look, and meaning possible.

For specifics on teaching poetry, we suggest you lean on the forthcoming 2nd Grade unit of study book on poetry, by Lucy Calkins and Stephanie Parsons (2013).

Assessment

As with any unit, it will be important for you to know what knowledge and experience your students bring to this unit on writing poetry. Before the unit begins, we strongly encourage you to give students an “on-demand writing assessment.” You might say, “Writers, today I’m going to give you some time to write a poem about something that matters to you. Remember to use everything you know about good poetry writing.” As you observe most students “finishing” their poems, you might ask them to take their revision pens and revise! This will show you what they know about revising poetry as well. You may decide to give them the whole 30 minutes of the workshop time, or just 15-20 minutes on the first day. Some questions that might drive your observation of student work might be: What do students think poetry is? What do students remember about studying poetry from last year? What are students using from the units we have studied so far this year? Are students selecting meaningful topics? Do students write with details? How are students using line breaks, white space, and punctuation? You will also want to keep in mind the qualities of good writing that you use throughout every genre study: Structure, Elaboration, Conventions/Craft, and Meaning.

After this initial assessment you will want to use the information you have gathered about your students to drive the instruction of the unit. Use the patterns you notice in student work to help you plan whole class minilessons and small strategy groups.

In addition to the “on-demand” assessment you administer at the beginning of the unit, you can collect formative assessments of your students throughout the unit by looking through their writing folders and asking questions during conferences to assess growth. Some questions you might ask include: “How did you decide on your topic for this poem?” “What details are you planning to add for your readers?” “How are you planning to use white space or line breaks in this poem?” “How are you planning to revise?”

Be sure to give your students an opportunity at the end of the unit to do another “on-demand” poem as a summative assessment so that you can compare the two pieces of writing and see how students are using what they have learned. Consider both the qualities of good writing and your main goals of the unit to assess how kids grew as poets and writers.

Unit Five – Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Bend One – Turning Our Classroom into a Place Where Poems Grow

In this first part of the unit, you will teach three important things: how writers look at the world with a poet's eyes, how writers notice the sound and the look of poems, and how writers find meaningful topics and write in ways that convey big thoughts, feelings and ideas.

You might start the unit off by studying everyday, ordinary objects in the classroom. Show writers how you can observe these objects closely, look at them through a poet's eyes, and talk about them in extraordinary ways. Gather up examples from writers whose poems are simple and visual, and whose images and meaning feel accessible to children. For example, you might look at a poem like this one by Zoe Ryder White:

The ceiling
is the sky
for the classroom

In this poem, children might notice first the way in which the words are divided—that the line breaks put emphasis on “ceiling” in the first line, on “sky” in the second, and on “classroom” in the third. Then you might ask students to think about what's being compared here. They should easily be able to say that the classroom ceiling is compared to the sky, which may prompt them to think about why. What does that image/comparison make them think or feel about a classroom? Why did the author compare the ceiling to a sky and not the ocean, or a wall, or a bank of snow?

You might bring out other poems to study the various ways that poems look on the page and how form gives poetry sound and rhythm. In doing close reading of poetry together as a class, you will want students to learn not only how to read, but also how to talk about the significance of the author's decisions about craft, such as line and stanza breaks, rhythm and repetition, images and comparisons.

Next, you will show writers how to talk and write about things in their own lives in unusual ways—ways that evoke an image or a feeling. Children could look at little objects, such as a pine cone, aiming to see the object with “poet's eyes.” You could use Nan Fry's poem, “Apple” to show children what it means to see with poet's eyes—she looks at an apple sliced in two and sees a snow-covered field, and when someone takes a bite, she hears the sound of boots crunching on snow. Students might then pick an object to write about themselves, trying to convey some sort of image that carries meaning for them. They could draw on their senses, thinking not only what that object looks and sounds like, but what it feels to the touch, or what it tastes or smells like. Push your students to think beyond the obvious. If they describe a backpack, does it smell musty, like two years of learning? Could a metal toy soldier be cold like winter?

In addition to close reading, you will want to find time for students to do regular choral readings of a few beloved poems, helping them realize that one reads a poem in ways that bring it to life. A poem about raindrops might be read with a splattering of voices, scattered around the room, as kids call out words in a way that is reminiscent of rain drops in a spring rain, and then as the poem progresses, the voices might change, reflecting the showers turning to a downpour. A

Unit Five – Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

poem might be read with two voices interacting, and perhaps for a time the readers stand back-to-back, turning at some point toward each other. You could give a copy of one poem, perhaps Alonzo Lopez's poem, "Celebration," to six clusters of readers, and different readers could perform that one poem differently, in ways that reflect various interpretations. As the class reads poetry together, emphasize again and again that these poems are mentors for children to consult when they write—children can think about how published poems look and sound, and about how poets of these poems use line breaks, rhythm, imagery, and so forth to convey big meaning, and then try any of these observations out as they compose their own poems.

Many teachers reincarnate the "Tiny Topics notepads" from the Authors as Mentors unit and suggest children use these to find and collect poems hiding in the details of their lives. You might refer to the beginning part of the year to remind students how to use their notebooks as a tool. You might say, "Remember how earlier this year when you were learning to write like Angela Johnson and Jane Yolen, you kept Tiny Topics notepads? If you were at home or at recess and you saw something tiny, something important that you knew you'd want to remember, you jotted it into your Tiny Topic notepads. Let's begin it again—only this time, you'll observe tiny details (like shadows that drift across your ceiling, or ants carrying food on their backs) that could become seeds for a *poem*."

You'll want to teach children, then, how to take a glimmer of an idea and get a draft of a poem on the page. How does one actually go about drafting a poem? We're not sure. Some poets say you get an intense feeling and a concrete image in your head and then write in a rush, as if you are so bursting with what you want to tell someone that you speak with extra urgency, directly to the person (in this case, the reader). Some poets talk about how it starts with a line—just one line, that seems to pop up out of nowhere. Once the poet has a line, she plays in her mind with how it will go, almost like one might play with different options for how to name a newborn baby—does that sound right? How about this? Once the poet figures this tiny part out, she is off and running.

The important thing is that this feel intense and joyful and unpredictable—this is like the toboggan ride down the hill. You line yourself up at the top of the hill; you wait until the way is cleared; you make sure everyone is aboard and that all feet are tucked in, and then in a whoosh, the toboggan is off. There is a way in which writing, like tobogganing, can't be stopped midway. Later, though, there is the talk about that ride—how was it? Should we try again? And poets, like toboggan riders, can line themselves up differently, hoping the next time for a smoother ride. That's revision—that next ride. Most of the revision that will work the best for young poets is not a fix-up routine. It is about trying again.

Part of trying again means encouraging your poets to go back to their Tiny Topic notepads and to seek out more ideas and images to explore in their poems. Writers might also want to think about how they can draw on topics they explored in past writing pieces to improve the quality and meaning of their poems. Another way you will want your students to revise is by using everything they know about showing versus telling from the narrative units earlier in the year.

Before moving on to Bend 2, you might want to have a “mini celebration” of some of the poems that kids have written during the unit so far. Ask your students to pick a couple of their favorites and then revise and edit these one more time! Some teachers like to share video clips of poets reading their poetry aloud. This helps kids hear what poetry can sound like and how it might differ from a story or an informational book. The Common Core Standards in Writing call upon second graders to use digital tools to publish and produce writing (2.6). In addition, the Speaking and Listening Standards expect that second graders will “create audio recordings of stories or poems” and include visual displays in order to “clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings” (2.5). Students can use these devices to help share and “publish” some of their writing as well. They can pick a few special poems and practice reading these with expression, and perhaps these recordings could become gifts for loved ones or be played at lunch time in the cafeteria. Either way, it is a nice way for students to celebrate, see and hear what others in the classroom have been doing as poets. This is also a good time to take stock of what kids have internalized so far in this unit. Use these pieces of writing as well as your formative assessments to help plan for instruction in the next bend of the unit.

Bend Two – Focusing on Language and Sound

Once a poet has written a number of drafts and one of those drafts—or part of one—feels especially strong and true, then the poet can focus on new revision work. Teach children that as poets revise, they also lift the level of their poetry writing skills, so the next poems they write incorporate all that they have learned through revision. The Common Core Standards expect that, with guidance, second graders should “focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing” (W 2.5). In this unit, students will refine and focus their poems through various revision strategies.

One of the most fundamental revision strategies you will want to teach is how writers effectively use line breaks. You will probably have touched on this during Bend One, but now you will spotlight it. To illustrate the effects that varying line breaks can have on a poem, you might put each word (or each phrase) from a class poem onto a separate card, and then use a pocket chart to show the class that changing the length of the lines can change the feeling and sound of the poem. It can also put emphasis on different words and images.

Challenge students to think about how word choice has a direct impact on the images a poem conveys, and the sounds, and the meaning. Language choice means the difference between “fry” and “sizzle,” “shine” and “sparkle,” “cry” and “bawl.” Children could talk about how substituting each of these word pairs changes these factors of a poem. You might comb through a poem with children, on the search for each action word (or adjective, or noun), and then pause at each one to ask, “What other words could fit here?” “Is there another word that can say the same thing in a better way?” Then, too, you could set children up in partnerships to read their poems to each other, giving feedback and looking carefully for places where everyday, generic verbs could be traded for fresher, more accurate action words: “jiggle” or “sway” could replace “move”; “moan and groan” could replace “complain.” Encourage your young poets to play around with language, listening to how words sound, thinking about what images they convey, aiming always for precision aligning with the Common Core State Standards around the use of language (CCSS LS 2.1)

Part of the decision-making process involved in word choice comes from thinking about the tone and rhythm of a poem. Is this poem serious or more lighthearted? Does the poem read like the steady, cyclical collision of waves on the shore? Or does it read like the staccato trip and bubble of a stream gurgling over rocks? With their partners, readers might think about how their poems sound and ask, “Does my poem sound long and flowing? Or does it sound bouncy and short?” Then you might teach children to comb through their poems and ask, “What word might fit the sound of this poem better?”

Another big point of focus for this bend could be comparison. Poets often write in metaphor and simile, and your children will know something about the kinds of comparisons that narrative writers make from their Mentor Author Study of Jane Yolen’s *Owl Moon*. Perhaps, in addition to poet’s “eyes” they are beginning to also use poet’s “voices”; that is, perhaps they themselves are speaking in comparisons. Keep an ear open to the kinds of comparisons they use in their everyday speech. Perhaps a child comments on a thunderstorm: “That rain cloud looks like midnight!” or “He’s as quiet as a mouse!” You might name that as a simile—or a comparison—and explain that just as children speak comparatively to convey images or conditions or feelings, poets use those types of comparisons in their writing for similar reasons. Poets make comparisons to convey meaning and feeling, or to give readers images in their minds.

You’ll also teach kids that poets often try to compare two things in new, surprising ways. In a poet’s eyes (and voice), a concrete object like the sun can be used to describe a non-concrete thing like a friendship or the love a mother feels for her child. Sometimes poets compare or join two seemingly unlike things to convey an image, feeling, or bit of wisdom; for example, “an alphabet of stars,” from the poem “Night Story” by Beverly McLoughland, suggests that the sky of stars has a story to tell, that something is written in the sky. Most people wouldn’t think to compare the alphabet to stars, but a poet sees the words, the story in those stars.

To guide your young poets through this work, you may choose a few mentor poems or specific poets to illustrate for children how they might play with language and the placement of text to convey meaning. You could model your teaching after the lessons you taught during the Authors as Mentors unit. Perhaps you’ll teach children how to create rhythm like Eloise Greenfield, line breaks like Bobbi Katz, or imagery like Valerie Worth. Encourage your writers to lay their poems alongside those of their mentor author and ask themselves, “Am I really writing in the style of this poet?” “Am I conveying meaning the way this poet does?” As you confer with your writers you might ask them, “What are you trying to say as a writer?” “Where is the heart of your poem?” “How are you using white space like Myra Cohn Livingston?” “Where are you using repetition like Eloise Greenfield?”

Writing partners will continue to support each other as they write and revise their poems. As they’ve done in other units, partners can help each other think about the topics they choose to write about, the craft of their poems, and the feelings they convey. The Common Core expects second graders to “participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners” (SL 2.1). As students work in partnerships, they could experiment with the use of language and how the poems are laid out on the page with line breaks and white space. You could teach them to ask each other questions such as, “Why did you choose to add a line break here?” “What small moment are you trying to rewrite?” “Whose work are you trying to emulate?” Questions like

these prompt children to think more purposefully about their writing decisions, which supports higher levels of complexity in Webb's Depth of Knowledge. Partners can also make suggestions such as, "Have you thought of using this word instead?" Together, poetry partners can play with language or line breaks to investigate other ways a poem could sound or look, to match the meaning they are trying to convey.

Bend Three – Edit, Publish, and Celebrate Anthologies of Poetry

Unlike other units where children choose one piece to publish, in this unit they might pick a few of their own poems to make public. You will want to make sure that students get to still work on revising and editing, just like they did in other units. While "sentence" making is different in this unit, writers still need to be aware of the choices they are making and why they are making these. In the last few days of the unit, students could revise these poems, choosing craft moves they have learned so far. You can teach them how to find treasures in discarded drafts and even how to turn "stories" into poems. Suggest that they gather a few poems that they feel will represent a personal anthology that reflects who they are as poets and people.

Just as they do in every unit, writers will edit for spelling and punctuation, and here, for shape and white space as well, so that their writing looks and sounds just the way they intend it to. There are multiple ways you might wrap up and celebrate this unit. Because they are making an anthology, students will have the opportunity to practice this work across pieces! Remember, writing partners can read not only for misspellings, but also for how *they* think the poem is to be read aloud. The poet can listen to the reader and decide, "Is that how I want my poem to be read? Is there something else I can do to give my reader 'signs' to read it another way? Is there punctuation to include? Should I revise some of the line breaks?" These are some questions that your second graders might be asking at this stage of the process.

There are many ways to publish and celebrate your students' work. Certainly in the age of digital tools, the options are endless. You might choose to take these selected poems and put them into a class anthology, which belongs to the classroom or is copied for each student. You might allow each poet to create his or her own anthology or perhaps let each poet create an anthology that contains his or her own poems as well as the poems by mentor poets. Other alternatives could be to post published poems around the school for all to see or to post them in nearby public places like neighboring coffeehouse. You might have students set poems to music or give their poetry away, creating "literary gifts." You might also suggest that students read their poetry to a variety of audiences, perhaps in an actual coffeehouse or cafe, creating the feeling of an authentic poetry reading. Another idea is to have children and adults write poetry side by side with the children teaching the adults as they write. Perhaps the children are in groups and leading stations where they instruct adults on how to generate ideas or craft their ideas into poems. Children and adults could also travel through poetry centers together, creating collaborative poems as they go.

All of these options can provide a meaningful way for your students to create beautiful final pieces, as well as to share and celebrate their poems with the world. But in the end, you'll decide what works best for your children and your class.

Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well

March/April

Overview

This unit was once just an option for second graders, but we’ve given the unit its own place in the sun because the Common Core State Standards spotlight the importance of children growing up knowing folk tales and fairy tales, so we expect these to be even more present on the high-stakes tests that kids will encounter in years to come. Furthermore, we agree with the Standards that these tales have terrific teaching power. Because they are by nature taut tales with clear story arcs, archetypes, and lessons, these tales are terrific models of craft moves that youngsters might apply to their own writing.

We know many of you are well-versed in fairy tales and folk tales—perhaps adaptations of *Cinderella* and *The Three Little Pigs* fill your bookshelves, and you’ve no doubt loved hearing the familiar tales told from new points of view and seeing them situated in new settings. In preparation for this unit, you may want to revisit some of these classics, and engage your class in close readings of several versions of them. Children will be doing this, too, in the parallel unit in reading folk tales and fairy tales we’re offering this year. Students will read multiple adaptations of well-known tales from all over the world. In writing workshop, you’ll invite children to write their own adaptations of some of their favorites. This invitation gives children a way to know those few fairy tales deeply, in their bones. Meanwhile, children will also grasp recurring elements in fairy tales. This unit also aims to use fairy tales as a vehicle for furthering your children’s abilities to write any kind of stories. You may want to reread the November unit on realistic fiction writing as you plan this unit because, above all, your goal is to give children more practice writing fiction.

Your children will know some fairy tales, but probably will not have turned the genre inside out to think about its constituent parts. They probably have yet to discover that things in fairy tales (and in many other stories) often come in threes—there are apt to be three sons or daughters, three wishes, three pigs, and magical people are apt to say incantations three times. They may not yet know that fairy tales often begin, “Once upon a time, long, long ago, in some setting, in some situation, there lived someone with an unusual trait.” When they read, “Once upon a time, in a land across the sea, there lived a king with twelve beautiful daughters,” the words will probably not resonate against a memory bank of similar story beginnings. The rhythms of these stories may not be familiar to young children yet, and so they don’t realize that the main character will no doubt have cares, worries, wants—and that these will probably lead to troubles. They’ll be surprised that the king who loved his daughters was so worried that they’d be snatched from him that he kept them secreted away—whereas you won’t be. And they may not realize that before long, there will be a sentence that marks the beginning of a turning point: “But then, one day . . .” Many second graders haven’t yet learned that in fairy tales, the good tends to win over bad, nor do they know that, as often as not, the younger, smaller, unlikely person will rise to the occasion and save the day, usually outwitting the far stronger opponent. Many of them have yet to make the spectacular discovery that the same tale can be told in many ways. Don’t,

Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

by all means, plan to dump all this information on them because the fun (and the work) will come from their making some of these discoveries on their own.

Assessment

You'll want to administer an "on-demand writing assessment" before launching this unit so that you can use this data in hand as you confer with individual writers and plan for small group work across the unit. Over the last several months, your second graders have been engaged in informational writing, persuasive writing and poetry. You'll prompt students to write an adaptation of a fairy tale they know well, so that you can measure their work against the TCRWP's *Narrative Writing Continuum*. This will help you glean some insight into their most current strengths and needs as you return to narrative writing. The levels on the *Narrative Writing Continuum* correlate to the Common Core State Standards in writing, calling upon second graders to write narrative texts "...in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure." (2.3) You'll want your second grade writers to reach a Level 2 on the continuum to meet these expectations.

The Common Core State Standards expect second grade readers to "describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action" (RL 2.5) and "acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud" (RL 2.6).

While you'll measure your students' initial on-demand writing pieces against the continuum, you'll also want to consider ways that your children are incorporating these expectations for craft and structure when writing narrative pieces. Across this unit, you'll support your students' ability to integrate this knowledge into their work as writers, while they "compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (e.g., Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures" (CCSS RL 2.9).

You'll also use this data in hand to assess your students' usage of the conventions of standard English, that is, their progress toward the Common Core Language Standards. This way, you can plan for the teaching you'll do to address grammatical structure, spelling and conventions (2.1, 2.2). Refer to the Spelling section located after Bend Four for more specific information on spelling assessment and instruction for the next two months. Additionally, you'll consider the vocabulary and word choice students are incorporating in their writing to plan for the teaching and revision work you'll embed across the unit to support your second graders' ability to "use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe" (CCSS L 2.6).

During the unit, you'll also want to collect some formative assessments to guide additional small group work and one-on-one conferences you will have. You can get this assessment data from your students through your research in writing conferences. You might ask some of the following questions:

- "How are you planning to adapt this tale?" or "Where will you set your adaptation?"
- "What elements from the original tale are you planning to change?"

**Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps
Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well**

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

- “What lesson do you hope your adaptation teaches?” and “How will you show that lesson in your story?”
- “How will you show the main character’s point of view?” or “What will you have that character say?” or “How will you plan to have that character act?”
- “How will you stretch your character’s problem to add tension to your tale?”
- “How are you planning to end or close your story?” and “What will happen to each character?”

At the end of this unit, when your students have finished publishing their fairy tales, you’ll once again ask them to complete an on-demand piece of writing, serving as a summative assessment. You can use this to measure growth, reflecting on the initial on-demand piece, student work across folders, published writing, and the summative on-demand piece. Ask: Are students including greater detail when elaborating in their writing? Has the structure of their writing improved? Are students writing with more sophisticated sentence structures, including phrases or conjunctions to compose their tale? Are students now meeting or exceeding grade level expectations?

Bend One – Rehearsing and Planning for Stories, Paying Careful Attention to Fairy Tale Language and Structure

In this unit, as in the previous narrative units, children will take a day before writing a story to plan it, perhaps using the temporary scaffold of informal planning booklets (made by the child by folding a blank sheet of paper into a booklet with four pages, then quickly sketching the main progression of one draft of the story, then storytelling this several times before trying an entirely different sequence on a different planning booklet). And in this unit, as in the previous narrative units, you will teach children that writers revise before we actually write. Writers revise as we plan in many ways but one of the most important involves reconsidering where, in the sequence of events, we’ll start the story (wanting to start it close to the main action). Specifically, writers ask, “Where in the sequence of events will my story start?” and “What exactly will the main character be doing or saying when the story starts?” and then writers become that main character, mentally acting out what that character does, thinks, and says, while scribing this mental movie onto the page. Before children write, they settle on one likely sequence and transfer the sketches from an informal planning booklet onto paper containing a picture box and lots and lots of lines, designating each page for one further sequence in the plot line of the story (CCSS W 2.3).

As we mentioned earlier, before you embark on the unit, you would have ideally read and reread several versions of two or three fairy tales aloud to your class. This close reading will allow your students to begin to compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story by different authors as stated in the Common Core State Standards (RL 2.9). In this part you will not only want your students to notice the similarities and differences as readers, but you will want them to start thinking about the authorial decisions behind such versions so that they begin to listen and read like writers. One class, for example, may have heard the teacher read and reread the traditional versions of *The Three Little Pigs*. At the start of this unit, you will want to reread yet again at least two (and ideally three) variations of one tale. Even if you will later bring out another fairy tale with all its variations, you’ll probably stick with just one at the start of the unit. You’ll need to decide whether some of those variations are told from opposing points of view, as

Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

when Scieszka retells *The Three Little Pigs* from the wolf's point of view, leading to a radically different sequence of events. An alternate point of view adds an entirely new level of complexity and challenge, and we suggest that for the time being, you select variations that hug the shores of the original text in more straightforward ways. But this is up to you. In any case, if you read lots of versions of one story to your children, by the time you are on your third adaptation, let children know before you read even just a page of that version of the story that you are speculating over how the writer will have adapted the tale this time. Let them know before you read even a single page that you expect the writer may have changed the setting from countryside to city, or altered the characters so that instead of being boys they are girls, or instead of pigs they are cats.

Even before you begin reading, help children know that any one change an author makes will lead to others. If the author writes a variation on *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* and turns the goats into raccoons, they are certainly not trip-trapping over a bridge to get to a meadow! Will they skitter across the bridge? Or will the author invent a different route to their destination? If their destination is a brim-full garbage can in the alley, are the raccoons crossing a porch instead of a bridge? That is, as you read aloud the third or fourth adaptation of one story, you can recruit children to co-author possible adaptations, and show them how the choices an author makes set things into motion. As you do this work, of course, you are helping children consider how yet one more adaptation can go—the child's adaptation!

It will be important for your children to use the existing text to scaffold their authorship of a new version. For example, after reading the text aloud as we just described, we recommend you give children time to reread the text on their own or with partners, thinking about how they might change the story so it bears the imprint of what they know and care about (the alterations are not random!). You'll want to give each partnership a copy of the text (or one version of it, anyhow) and during writing time, encourage partners to reread and rethink the text. (Don't give them worksheets to guide this work, though you may be tempted to do so! This is a writing workshop!) Or, you'll give children blank books, ask them to sketch a version they have read in those books and then to use that sketched recreation of one version to scaffold the version the child invents. If many of your children cannot actually read the words on copies of the book, that is okay. As long as you have read the text at least three times, they can use the pictures and their memories of the text to recreate the general sequence, which is all they will need to study in order to imagine how the text could have gone differently. Partners could also support one another in the rereading of the texts. This collaborative work supports the Speaking and Listening standards outlined by the Common Core (2.1, 2.2, 2.3).

To help children imagine how they can tell the tale differently, you'll need to give them some quick lessons on reading critically. Authors rewrite traditional tales for reasons, and students should be able to identify and understand these reasons, which is usually to teach a lesson or bring forth a message to the reader. This work supports the Common Core Standards because second graders are called upon to read and recount stories and "determine their central message, lesson or moral." (RL 2.2) Sometimes we rewrite a familiar tale because we disagree with the way the tale stereotyped girls (the good ones are beautiful, the bad ones are ugly, and girls in general are not the active doer but the passive prize). Then, too, authors may disagree with the

**Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps
Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well**

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

way wolves or foxes or stepmothers are stereotyped. In a similar way, authors may disagree that the real prize worth going after is money or food—we may want the prize to be world peace, or ways to help others. Sometimes authors rewrite a tale to make it more relevant to readers who live in cities. Sometimes we want the tale to be more appealing to children. Teachers, you will need to help children mull over their options and to show them that one way to do this is to revisit one version of the fairy tale, talking about how the story could be told differently. During writing workshop, partnerships can reread a version of a fairy tale and talk about the choices the author made and the choices they could imagine reconsidering.

Of course, most of this work will center not so much on mulling over decisions, and more on imagining the implications of any one of those decisions. If one child wants to explore the possibility that *The Three Little Pigs* be renamed *The Three Little Dogs*, then that child will probably end up wondering whether the villain should still be a hungry wolf. Might it be an eager dog catcher? Would the story still be set in the country, or might it be in a city? Meanwhile another writer may decide to take issue not with the fact that the main characters are pigs or the villain is a wolf, but instead, with the ways the pigs treat the wolf. The pigs show no concern over the fact that the wolf is hungry. What if they'd worked with ingenuity to help the hungry prowler? During the workshop, children will reread, exploring ways the one plot line could be tweaked, stretched, or twisted so as to create a host of other stories or adaptations. Once they begin to imagine other ways in which the story could go, they'll need to shift to planning booklets. They'll probably need more than the four pages they've used in the past for planning, and so you may suggest they begin with not one but two sheets of paper, folded over as described in the fiction unit, creating eight-page blank planning books.

A word of caution: If you worry that children may not be successful in this unit without a lot of support, don't act on those fears by setting the whole class up to plan one fairy tale variation in unison, with every one of your children then writing a tale that the class has planned together. Instead, say to yourself that it is totally fine for seven-year-olds to try something as ambitious as the work you've laid before them and to produce a text that simply represents their seven-year-old best effort. You are asking these youngsters to try their hand at something that we would probably find challenging—let them have a go! Their seven-year-old efforts to draw aren't all that professional either, and you let them “have a go.” Do the same with this unit. This unit serves as a nice scaffold to prepare your writers for the expectation that the Common Core State Standards set forth for third grade, to not only write and develop real narratives, but imagined ones as well.

The work described so far will most likely require two or three days at the start of this unit, and none of those days will have involved a lot of actual writing. So as children go about rehearsing (as described above and in the unit on fiction writing), you'll probably want to use conferences and small-group work to channel them toward the actual writing. As before, your children will need booklets of at least five pages, and for most, each of those pages will look rather like notebook paper, with space on each page for about five to seven sentences. You may find that some of your especially proficient second graders could literally be writing on lined notebook paper—fold a page over at its waistline, and you'll create booklets containing four half-pages. Be sure children sketch or jot a word in a corner of each page, signifying that on that page the child

**Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps
Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well**

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

will tell the beginning, middle and end of just the one micro-event that goes onto that page, represented in that icon. The first page of a *Three Billy Goats Gruff* variation may tell about Goat number 1 crossing the bridge, the second page might be Goat number 2, the third page, Goat number 3 (joined in this version by the nearby brothers). The author may need additional pages, which is fine. Be sure when the child goes to write that each page is written a bit like a Small Moment story, with the writer starting by thinking, “What exactly is this character doing at the start of this episode? (Goat number 1 crossing the bridge)—The littlest Billy Goat looked across the bridge and saw a nice green meadow. ‘Mmm, that looks good,’ he thought, and then stepped toward the bridge . . .”

While teaching any unit of study, you will want to gather with your colleagues to think together about the predictable problems children are apt to encounter. You should anticipate that the challenge of helping children storytell (as we did above) rather than summarize (“The littlest goat crossed the bridge and the troll attacked him”) will be an enduring one. Level 2 in the TCRWP’s *Narrative Writing Continuum* expects second grade writers to compose stories that “often begin with an initiating action rather than a summary of the situation or plot” and that the “writer provides enough information that it is clear who is doing what and where the action is taking place.” You should have a whole repertoire of teaching strategies to draw upon to help children draft and revise toward the goal of storytelling rather than summarizing (also called “show, don’t tell”) to support their progress toward these end-of-year expectations. Remember, you can suggest children reenact (dramatize) and then write, you can suggest children storytell repeatedly, and so on. If you are expecting children to revise a summarized story so as to make it a story told, know that this will probably require an entirely new draft. If a child tries to simply add a few details to a summary, the resulting text is usually not much better than the first one.

In this unit as in earlier units, each of your second graders will write a handful of stories during this month of writing. You will need to decide whether these continue to be variations of the one fairy tale or whether children tackle another fairy tale altogether. If the latter, will this be another fairy tale that you’ve read aloud and discussed with lots of whole-class work? Or will the children’s work with the next fairy tale be more independent? These are all great options, and we recommend that you and your colleagues refrain from seizing too quickly on one track or another. As is always the case with curricular decisions, each choice will have its own possibilities and its own limitations.

Bend Two – Option 1: Revising and Elaborating Your Story to Create Tension, Convey Meaning, and Consider Different Possibilities

There may be advantages to spending another week or two (or three) writing adaptations to the one single fairy tale that you and the class have already studied. After all, the real goal of this unit is for children to come to know fairy tales so well that these texts become part of them—and lift the level of their writing. When Hemingway was asked, “How do you learn to write?” he answered, “Read *Anna Karenina*, read *Anna Karenina*, read *Anna Karenina*.” It is arguable that one of the best ways for your children to learn to write is to read (and rewrite) *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, and then to read and rewrite *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* all over again.

Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

If you decided that you'd like your children to invest another week or two working with the one fairy tale for which they've written an adaptation, our suggestion is to try rallying them to reread the adaptation they've already written, and if they like it, if they regard it as full of potential, then help them realize that real writers write not just one draft, but several drafts, before their story is done. Suggest that this time, children might reread the original story noticing not only the broad outlines of the choices the author made—that is, noticing not only that the characters in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* are goats, but also noticing the way in which the original text was written.

You can encourage your writers to bring out the template of craft charts from across the year when apprenticing themselves to mentor authors, and to again notice places where the fairy tale gets to them—makes them feel something or see something—and then ask, “What exactly did the author do to create this effect?” The Common Core calls for second graders to notice these craft features and to “describe how words and phrases supply rhythm and meaning” (RL 2.4). Of course, children will notice all sorts of things—the way the wolf breaks into verse before huffing and puffing at the little pig’s house, the fact that the pigs don’t seem to have specific names. Some of these will represent traits that are common to many fairy tales, some of these will represent qualities of good writing that you hope writers emulate often, and some will just be peculiarities of the text under study. Either way, help youngsters to ask, “Why might the author have decided to write this way?” and “What would the text be like if the author had written it differently?” and “Are there places in my own writing where I could try my hand at something similar?”

As children study and emulate the craft in fairy tales, you will certainly want to call their attention to features that you think are worth noting. For example, you’ll probably want to help children notice that fairy tale writers often incorporate a certain kind of literary language, using phrases such as, “Once upon a time . . .” and “But then, one day . . .” or “Not long after that . . .” You may also want to show children that fairy tale writers often write with complex sentences. Instead of writing “He did this and then he did that and then he did this and then he did that”—chaining simple sentences together, using ands as linking words—fairy tale writers often begin a sentence by telling when or where or under what conditions or with what sorts of feelings, someone did something. For example, “Just after the little goat reached the other side of the bridge, the middle goat took a step towards the bridge.” Another example, “Worrying that the troll would appear again, the middle goat walked quickly across the bridge.” This work with language aligns nicely with the Common Core State Standards for Language that call for second graders to be able to use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading, and being read to (2.6). The Standards also expect students to produce, expand, and rearrange complete simple and compound sentences when writing and speaking (L 2.1f). Fairy tales are almost invariably structured like classic stories, with a character wanting something, running into trouble, and finally figuring out a way to tackle the trouble. We do not recommend that you expect children in second grade to develop the meta-cognitive sophistication necessary to be able to think with any specificity about the story grammar that underpins most stories, but while children are rereading and writing fairy tales, you will probably want to highlight just the simplest, most obvious aspects of these stories. That is, you can help children see that the main character has something he or she wants, something the character is trying to get, and then the

character ends up encountering trouble, difficulties, and obstacles. Eventually, to the reader's great relief, the main character usually finds some way to surmount the difficulties so the story can end "happily ever after."

You may decide to look specifically at the structure that supports many stories, and to see if they can see this structure underpinning the story the class has studied together (CCSS RL 2.5). Does that same structure support the child's rendition of the tale? More specifically, you can suggest that writers locate the points in the published fairy tale and in their own version in which characters encounter trouble. Usually, that trouble will get worse and worse before it is resolved. Reading this section of a story, the reader almost feels as if he or she is reliving the trouble. Things begin to get bad, then they get worse and worse. Tension builds. Children can study how fairy tale authors build tension and can reread their own drafts asking, "What can I do to bring out the tension even more in my story?" Of course, in order to bring out the tension in a story, writers are wise to shift into the role of storyteller, saying the story aloud, hoping to do so in ways to give listeners goosebumps.

Over the next few days you will also help children decide what it is they really want their story to show and convey. For instance, a story about a child's trip on the roller coaster can show that the child's father will do anything for his son, or it can show that the child is able to combat his fears. Children need to learn that, for example, the story will start differently, largely depending on the meaning the writer wants to advance. Different sections of the story will be stretched out and highlighted. Again, the decision will relate to a student's decision to advance one meaning or another. Fairy tales usually contain a fairly heavy-handed moral. One story, for example, will teach that intelligence wins over brute force. Another teaches that kindness and generosity accompany (or create) beauty, and that anyone can become a princess. These stories, then, provide children with chances to practice highlighting a meaning or moral. You will help children make decisions as to what moral they might wish to teach in their stories.

You'll decide if there are other aspects of published fairy tales that you want to highlight. Make this decision by reading over student drafts and asking, "What gets in the way of these being better?" and "What do many students seem to be on the brink of being able to do?" Look over the *Narrative Writing Continuum* and think about where most of your students seem to fall at this time of the year, and look ahead to notice the skills that writers who are working at just a bit more advanced level demonstrate. For example, if many writers seem to write narratives like those in Level 4 on the *Narrative Writing Continuum*, you may decide that one way to help them become stronger writers is to help them realize that a fairy tale, like any story, contains just a couple of scenes and those scenes can be written as Small Moment stories. As students go through the revision process with teacher and peer guidance, as stated in the Common Core, they will "focus on a topic and strengthen writing" (W 2.5).

As you do this, remember that qualities of good writing need to be turned into processes. So, for example, if it seems to you that all the characters in many of your children's stories seem similar to each other, you might suggest to writers that they act out a scene from a child's story during a partnership share, thinking carefully about how each character walks or talks. The goats trip-trap across the bridge—but how does the troll move? Surely he doesn't trip-trap! Once children have

**Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps
Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well**

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

acted out the ways that one character moves differently than another, then they can reach for precise accurate words to depict what they envision.

Of course, instead of suggesting children write entirely new drafts of their fairy tale rendition, you might have encouraged them to write very different versions of the familiar story. As part of this, you could teach them to borrow Jon Scieska's technique of telling the same tale through the point of view of a different character.

Bend Two – Option 2: Crafting Your Own Version of an Old Tale

Then again, teachers could decide on a totally different route in this unit. You could suggest that after children all write a variation of a fairy tale that you read to them, then they can continue to do the same work with another fairy tale, only this time working more independently. The second fairy tale could be one that each child chooses from those he or she knows or from another two or three that you have read aloud to the class. In either instance, writers who can do so could also do some of their own reading and research. Some teachers have created reading clubs, gathering children around different fairy tales. If the teacher has a couple of versions of *Jack and the Beanstalk* that children who can read level H/I books can read, then she might see if some readers who could handle that book (and some of their friends) might want to try writing a new variation of that tale. If she has an audio tape of one *Cinderella* book and could recruit someone to read a second version of that tale aloud to a small group, then that group, too, would be well on their way. The plans that a teacher decides upon will obviously be shaped by the second graders' reading abilities and by the classroom collection of fairy tale books.

If teachers opt to encourage second graders to tackle a second and perhaps even a third fairy tale, writing new versions of each, it will still be important to leave time for some of the revision work described above. Perhaps before the last week of the unit, children can be invited to reread all the fairy tales they have written, selecting their best for further revisions—and those revisions can incorporate some of what was described earlier in this write-up.

Bend Three – A Far-Out Option for the Final Week: Fantasy

If children have been revising all along, there is another alternative for the final week of this unit. You may want to give children a chance to write their own imaginative fiction, relying on everything they know from the work with realistic fiction and also the work with fairy tales. Do you know that feeling you get when you browse a bookstore and spot a book that feels like an invitation? You pick it up and have this palpable sense of excitement turning the pages. "My students could write a story like this!" you think. For the final week of the unit, then, one option is to lay books side by side that feel a bit like that: Ella George Lyons' beautiful text *The Star Fisher*, for example, and Maurice Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are*, or Anthony Browne's *Gorilla*. You can decide—there are lots of options. Choose books that are as lean and beautifully written as possible, and that exemplify much of what children have learned about Small Moment writing and yet are not bound by that. Choose books, too, that carry many of the traits of fairy tales and yet are not fairy tales. Then you might say to children, "For our very final week before vacation, let's do something magical, something special. Let's try our hands at a project second graders don't usually do—writing imaginary fiction."

Point out to children that very often, the first few pages of an imaginary story reads as if it is realistic fiction. The start of the story usually shows a character, grounded in the real world, who has a problem. Then something happens, something very specific and precise and sensory. And that micro-event ignites a story that reads as if it is true, that spins out just like a Small Moment story or a fairy tale, but that in fact contains magic. When children write the magical sections of their text, teach them something Madeleine L'Engle once said. To summarize, "If you want people to believe that elephants are flying overhead, you need to be especially precise. Don't say, 'I looked up and saw elephants flying overhead.' Instead say, 'I just looked up and saw seven elephants—six grownups and a baby—fly through the gap in those trees over there. They were all in a line, the baby first. Then they flew around that building.'"

Be sure that you remind children of all they know—that they use the planning booklets, or do some variation of that work with the booklets in which they will be writing. Be sure they act out the story and tell it several times before they write it, and that you help them storytell rather than summarize—and absolutely encourage them to start page one by having the character do a very small (smaller than they think) action or say something. Remind children of the power of literary language and those beautiful phrases they learned from studying fairy tales. Help them remember that stories tend to involve a character who encounters some sort of trouble, and who finds the trouble getting worse and worse before something happens to resolve it. Above all, be sure that children are not moving along in sync with every one of them sketching out how their story will go on one day, and trying three leads on the next day, and writing the whole story fast and strong on the next day. Let children internalize how the process unrolls and progress at their own pace! Let them draw from your charts and their knowledge, becoming their own decision makers, becoming independent writers (DOK Level 3).

One final point: This will be the last week of work with narrative and you should see evidence of all that children have internalized across the entire school year. You will probably want to end the unit with another day of assessment, so go back to the Assessment section of this curricular calendar and reread the directions for assessing narrative writing. Give children the same amount of time, and once again, refrain from hints and reminders.

Bend Four – Editing and Publishing a Few Fairy Tales

As this unit draws to a close, you'll channel your writers to return to their most favored pieces from across the month to further edit in preparation for publication. Ask students to publish a few of their favorite pieces, celebrating the different adaptations, or even fantasy stories children have composed during this unit.

Just as they have across the year, writers will edit for spelling and punctuation, so that their writing looks and sounds just the way they intend it to. Since students are preparing more than one story for the celebration, they will have the opportunity to practice this work across a few pieces! You'll want to reinforce the spelling strategies you have taught across the year to make sure these skills are strong, especially those expected by the Common Core Language Standards, including the ability to "generalize learned spelling patterns when writing words" and "consult reference materials, including beginning dictionaries, as needed to check and correct spellings" as well as classroom word walls and word study charts (2.2). Of course, you'll remind writers to

Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

use what they know about decoding print to transfer these foundational skills into their spelling work (CCSS RF 2.3).

To celebrate the journey through the fairy tale world your students have embarked on over this past month, you might decide to invite your writers to channel their inner storyteller, performing their tales aloud to small groups of kindergarten buddies. Perhaps you'll ask partnerships to rehearse their stories together, practicing how the pieces should sound when read aloud, editing for punctuation and reading with greater fluency and expression (CCSS RF 2.4). You might designate a new basket in your classroom library to the fairy tale stories your children have published, or include published writing in preexisting genre baskets, inviting classmates to read each other's pieces, bringing this unit to its own happily ever after ending.

Spelling

Attending to Pattern and Meaning when Spelling Words

At this point in the year you have taught students about the many vowel patterns that exist, and you are probably seeing them write words more accurately because of this knowledge (CCSS L2.2d). You have done more work around meaning of words when spelling, and that means not only are students using what they know about sounds in words and patterns to represent those sounds, but they are also thinking about the meaning they are trying to convey as this helps them determine which pattern to use. Continue this work by moving into teaching inflectional endings including those that change number and tense (plurals and -ed endings) and beginning work around prefixes and suffixes. Don't expect that students will fully secure their use of these endings and affixes, but begin to apply knowledge of these to impact meaning, as they will come back to this work next year when they are studying syllables and affixes more closely. Your writers will have a great deal of practice using these word parts when writing, especially in this fairy tales unit, as they are writing in the past tense and using suffixes when writing words that describe characters— traits, verbs and adverbs to describe movement through a scene (e.g. *helpful, shouted, slowly*) (CCSS 2.1e). They also will gain practice using plural forms of words including irregular plurals (e.g. *mice, teeth*) (CCSS 2.1b), and this may be the time you also practice using apostrophes for possessive nouns (CCSS 2.2c).

While the strategies for problem-solving words will remain similar to ones you've been demonstrating all year—breaking a word into syllables and smaller parts and connecting to known words and patterns—your demonstrations and coaching will now push students to a higher level of spelling with a focus on meaning and reflection. Show how you think about what you want to write, the parts you hear, and what those parts mean to make sure you are writing the word so it looks right and makes sense. If you want to write about how a character in your fairy tale “scampered” through the forest, think aloud about the ending you'll need to add so the reader knows it happened in the past. The same process applies to using plural and possessive endings. When students begin learning about possessive nouns, they often overuse apostrophes, turning regular plural words into possessives. You can teach them to reread for meaning, thinking, *Does this make sense to the reader?* For example, if they see an apostrophe, they should check to make sure that they are describing what belongs to someone or something. Showing this in your own writing is helpful because then children see what they are doing and how to then fix it up.

**Unit Six – Writing Adaptations of Familiar Fairy Tales and Folk Tales, and Perhaps
Writing Original Fantasy Stories as Well**

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

Editing

By now your writers are writing with stronger control over language conventions than they did at the beginning of the year. You will want to celebrate this growth, reflecting on what they now do *as* they write and what confusions they are still having and fixing up when they edit at the end of the unit. Hopefully children are applying skills such as using ending punctuation and capital letters are more frequently *as* they write. These skills are becoming habits, and soon the other skills such as using apostrophes will become habits as well. Right now, though, you may still have to do a lot of reminding, getting students to reread their writing throughout the unit to check for these conventions. Their writing by now is so much easier to read, and while that is exciting for them and for you, it does actually mean that it can feel more challenging for writers to find what doesn't look quite right, as these are often smaller mistakes—an apostrophe that needs to be inserted, the reversal of letters in a vowel team, a capital letter missing in the second word of a product name. Keep the editing checklist visible throughout the unit, and set writers up to practice this work independently and with partners during different parts of the workshop. Also give them the checklists to use as they do the final editing work in the publication process—one checklist per page—if that helps them attend to the high number of conventions they are expected to apply at this time of the year.

Unit Seven – Informational Writing About Science

May/June

Overview

We have several goals for the upcoming unit of study in writing workshop. First, we want children to use writing to explore an aspect of science that is essential. This year we have written the unit as if they are studying forces and motion. The reason we're channeling you toward forces and motion is that we hope this unit provides children with opportunities to use writing to engage in the work that scientists do—developing and testing hypotheses, gathering data, and studying information for patterns. This unit aligns with the informational writing that the Common Core State Standards require, allowing second graders to participate in shared research around a common topic to then influence their writing (W.2.7). The topic of forces and motion is conducive to fruitful, expeditious experimentation. But the topic that you and your children study together is your choice. You can easily use the basic outline of this unit to support studies of any topic that you believe will be engaging for your kids and will bring them toward an understanding of one of the concepts that is essential to science.

This unit builds on the energy and enthusiasm children carry about the world around them. You have probably noticed that the children in your classroom are eager to learn about the world. They gather leaves as they change colors from summer to fall, collect rocks and seashells, and come to school excited to talk, draw, and write about the things that surround them. Before now, your second graders will presumably have been engaged in some science studies and workshops, and they will probably have learned to observe closely, to ask big questions, and to follow procedures to pursue those questions. You will now channel their burgeoning interest in science into the writing workshop, showing learners that writing need not be an end in and of itself, but that it can also be a tool for learning.

You will want to approach this unit with a grand plan for its overall design. Implicit in this unit is that kids will use the writing process to help produce quality writing work in science. You will still confer into the quality of informative writing (CCSS. W.2.2) as well as support students with revising and editing for an audience (W.2.5). As in many other K–2 units, children will cycle through repeated tries at doing the work of the unit, as you support your young scientific writers to record, to question, to hypothesize and observe, and finally, writing to teach others (W.2.8; SL.2.4, 2.5, and 2.6). As children engage in this work repeatedly, you'll teach in ways that lift the level of what they are doing, so that over time they will use more sophisticated moves as they record, question, experiment, and teach.

Obviously, the unit breaks with tradition in that it is a hybrid—it is science and writing rolled into one. Usually your writing workshops have been an hour long and have begun with a minilesson, then included a big chunk of time for kids to write, and ended with time for children to share their writing with partners. In this hybrid science-writing workshop, however, we hope that at least twice a week you'll be able to extend the hour-long writing workshop so that it is ninety minutes for the hybrid of science and writing. Although each day will still begin with a minilesson, the minilessons will not all just invite kids to do the work that writers do, they will also invite kids to do the work that scientists do. You will most likely want to break this science-

Unit Seven – Informational Writing about Science

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

writing workshop into two parts. You might start with a science portion of the workshop in which children conduct experiments. When they go off to their work spots to begin, they might well be wrapping balls in tinfoil to see if the foil alters the height of the bounce, or rolling square and circular objects down an inclined plane, recording the relative speeds.

Of course, this is still a writing workshop as well as a science workshop. At some points, then, children will be engaged in the scientific processes of hypothesizing; at others, they will be engaged in writing processes of recording observations and drawing conclusions. Imagine your two hands, folded together, with fingers interlocked. In just that way, your youngsters will shift from doing the work of being a scientist to doing the work of being a writer.

In the first bend of the unit, children will study a whole-class topic during a daily science-writing workshop, and will write, sketch, and jot questions in order to record and grow their thinking. They'll conduct experiments, first as a class and then on their own, and learn to write second-grade versions of laboratory reports, complete with hypotheses, observations, diagrams and conclusions. They will also write how-to, or procedural, texts as a science student does after working on an experiment. This upholds the expectations of the Common Core State Standards for Writing that second grade writers participate in shared research and writing projects and record science observations (2.7), recalling, or gathering information to answer a question (2.8).

These records of work done will teach others what the young researcher did so others can replicate the experiment and see if they get similar results. This unit, then, provides children with purposes for writing—and those purposes are diverse so the writing that students will be doing will also be diverse. Children will draw on much of what they know about different kinds of—and purposes for—writing in this unit, using aspects of what they have learned from writing how-tos, persuasive texts, and nonfiction books. Don't be too concerned if your children's initial writing feels sparse. Like you, they will need a bit of time to find their footing in this hybrid unit and learn to balance scientific inquiry with the writing process.

In the second bend of the unit, children will launch into their own experiments, writing proposals, trying experiments out, and writing them up. You'll build on what children learned to do in Bend One, teaching them new ways to record information, to write more detailed how-to texts, and to explore questions in writing.

In the third and final bends, children will compile all the information they have learned about their topics and make informational books that teach others how to conduct similar experiments. These will include an introduction, information about the topic, a description of the procedure, talks about their daily journey, and their conclusions. Children may select to write up one experiment that they tried or a series of experiments that they tried to help answer a question aligning with the Common Core State Standards. We're recommending the DK publication *I'm a Scientist: Kitchen* (Burke, 2010) as one possible mentor text for the final product of this unit. Help students conduct a close reading of this text to help them understand how this author uses the features of nonfiction, talks about new and specific vocabulary, and also describes and explains the main points about the topic. This work not only reflects the craft and structure standards of the Common Core State Standards for Reading Informational Text (2.4, 2.5, 2.6), it also ties reading and writing workshop tightly together. Choose other nonfiction read-aloud and

shared reading texts that you will also read closely with the entire class—not just for craft and structure, but for information that can be used in their writing (as research) as well as to strengthen their understanding of the content topic. Here you will reinforce such reading skills as asking and answering questions, understanding the main ideas and purposes of a text, understanding and developing theories about how information fits together as well as comparing and contrasting points across two texts on the topic (CCSS RI.2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.8, 2.9).

Assessment

Before you begin any unit of study, you will collect some data to support your unit planning. In the past few months, students have been writing about reading, writing poetry, and writing adaptations of fairy tales and folktales. Your students have grown as writers over the last few months and you will want to see how the work they have been doing supports their work in informational writing. A formative on-demand writing assessment will help you assess their current needs and guide your teaching in this unit of informational writing. Prompt your students to write an informational book that teaches others about a previously studied topic in science. This way, you can compare their writing to the TCRWP's *Informational Writing Continuum*, and discover how students are weaving content knowledge into their writing. The levels on the *Informational Writing Continuum* correlate to the Common Core State Standards in writing informational texts (2.2 and 2.8). Your second grade writers will need to reach Level 2 to meet these expectations.

After you administer the formative on-demand assessment, use this data to make plans for the teaching you'll do across this upcoming unit. Some children will need more support with structuring their writing to include headings, text features, or introductions. Other students may need more support with elaboration. The writing produced at Level 2 of the TCRWP's *Informational Writing Continuum* is "a collection of information related to one topic, some of which has been elaborated on. Categories are present, often aided by paper or writing tools designed to support grouping of related information." Use this data in hand as you confer and work with students one-on-one and in small groups. Throughout this unit, collect student folders and study their work as part of your on-going formative assessments to track and see how students are growing. As you continue to use other formative assessments, like conferring and various types of small groups, you will strategize how to move students up the writing ladder to improve upon the qualities of informational writing, spelling and conventions (CCSS LS.2.1, 2.2, 2.6 and CCSS FS 2.3)

After your students finish publishing their "lab reports," or science informational pieces, ask them to create another on-demand piece of writing. This will serve as a summative assessment, which you can use to measure growth. Are students including more elaboration in their writing? Has the structure of their writing improved? Are they now meeting or exceeding grade level expectations?

Preparing for the Unit

The very first preparation you will probably do for this unit is to decide on a whole-class topic, preferably one that aligns with your science standards. This is a critical choice. Remember that your whole class will be living like scientists around and inside this topic for the whole month. We're suggesting forces and motion, as it aligns with second-grade science standards and offers

Unit Seven – Informational Writing about Science

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

many component parts (gravity, magnets, inclined planes, levers, and so on) for students to study. You will, of course, consult your library when making a topic choice, since you'll need nonfiction books on the topic to serve as writing mentors and sources of information. You might also consider choosing a topic about which your children have some prior knowledge, or which they can study simultaneously in science workshop. Whatever the topic, you'll ask yourself, "Does this topic have breadth?" In other words, will you be able to divide the topic into plenty of component parts for children to study in greater detail over the course of the month? Can this topic accommodate a multitude of in-class experiments? For example, a topic like "The Life Cycle of a Butterfly" might be too narrow a topic for a whole-class inquiry because it is hard to imagine a whole class writing about nothing but this for the length of an entire month. It may be even more difficult to imagine the kinds of experiments they'd create to explore their burgeoning questions and hypotheses.

A second thing to keep your eye on while choosing a whole-class topic is whether it is localized to students' real environments, in other words, accessible to bring into the classroom. Keep in mind that you want children living the real life of scientists this month and so the topic ought to provide actual chances for them to make observations, conduct experiments, and note and describe findings. Much as you would like for kids to read up on their topics, in this month you're aiming for kids to live out the scientific method and not just summarize what they find already written in reference books. In the end, you want your scientists to climb inside their topic and live with it, channeling their natural sense of play into the act of being a scientist.

Plan to teach science in your own classroom or collaborate with the science teacher and chalk out several possible inquiries and experiments that children might pursue this month on the chosen topic. You'll also need books—ones that can serve as mentor texts for the kind of writing you hope children will produce, books that serve as references and books with diagrams, charts, and illustrations for children to pore over and study. You'll line up these books around the children's work area, engaging your students in close reading of complex texts. You may decide to pull some key selected excerpts from these, and study these in shared reading and read-aloud. You will also reference these as touchstones during conferring, other formative assessments and during the demonstration portion of your minilessons. If you have the books to support it, you may want to have some of your book clubs studying the whole-class topic during reading workshop. Don't underestimate the power that read-aloud will have in propelling this unit forward, exposing your young scientists to a wide variety of nonfiction texts on forces and motion: narrative nonfiction that takes readers through the process of how forces make things move; expository nonfiction that teaches all about springs and magnets and pulleys; nonfiction procedural texts that teach how to accomplish a scientific experiment; and question and answer books that invite the reader to wonder along with the author, and answer questions. The work done while closely reading a text in read-aloud and during reading workshop will not only support a growing content knowledge but also the skills of scientific writing. Through read-aloud, teach children to synthesize portions of text, identifying big ideas, and then show them how these big ideas can serve to propel their experiments. For instance, after growing some big ideas about gravity in read-aloud, children might then plan for experiments they want to conduct. You'll hear children say things like, "Gravity works differently on different objects. I'm going to drop an eraser and a pencil and see which falls faster to the ground." Then too, as they develop conclusions from their own experiments, children will use what they've learned from reading

about forces and motion to add evidence to bolster their own ideas: “My experiment showed that the eraser fell faster. In *What Is Gravity?* it said that gravity pulls more on heavier objects. I think this is why the eraser fell faster than the pencil. It is heavier than the pencil.”

Lastly, you’ll decide where your students will do all this writing. Perhaps students will start a scientist’s notebook, in which case you’ll want to build it up as a place to observe, sketch, question, and wonder—a place to write with volume and stamina as they study the world around them. Then again, you may feel that starting folders is a better option, where students can continue to use varied paper choices and use this folder to collect their writing and experiments.

Bend One – Scientists Write About the World, Experiment to Answer Lingering Questions, and Use What They Have Learned About Informational Writing to Teach Others

As the unit begins, immerse your children in a topic for scientific study. We recommend that you expose them to one area of forces and motion in the first bend, narrowing their study to only inclined planes, for instance, or simply magnets. You’ll expose them to far more in the second bend—once they’ve learned to observe, research, and write like scientists. So, in Session I, you’ll spread materials around the room relating to inclined planes (or whatever topic you’ve chosen), spreading marbles and rubber balls and various planes around the tables. Give your children this first session to immerse themselves in the study of these objects, to play and experiment and play some more. Equip them with paper, or their science notebooks, and show them how to record observations and questions about the objects they’re studying, knowing that throughout the unit you’ll teach more and more ways scientists use their notebooks or folders.

One form of writing you might remind children of is sketching with labels and captions, where scientists draw the setup from an experiment and then label it using precise vocabulary and adding in captions that explain the process in greater detail. It is conceivable that some students feeling full of the energy and enthusiasm of discovery will add a few words to one sketch, then move onto another and another. Therefore, it is important to teach them that scientists (and writers) linger. This means teaching them to add all they can add to their sketches, in both words and images. For example, if a child has drawn a simple sketch of a pulley, then you will teach him to not just draw the base and the string, but to draw the wheel around which the string is wound and the object that hangs from the hook on the end. You will teach this child to label all the parts using the language scientists use (referring to mentor texts, books and read-alouds for this information when necessary) and then to elaborate on those labels by writing captions to accompany them.

As early as Session II of this unit, you’ll be ready to channel all your scientists toward one teacher-led experiment. You’ll remind students of all they’ve learned about the scientific process. You might say, “Remember how in science you learned to ask questions, come up with a hypothesis, make observations, and then make a conclusion at the end? Well, today we’re going to do an experiment using an inclined plane and two different-sized balls and use everything we know about the scientific process together.” Give students the essential question that drives the experiment on this day, rallying them toward a common inquiry: “Scientists, today we’re going to do an experiment where we try rolling these two different balls down the same plane. Let’s all be thinking about the question, ‘What makes some objects travel faster than others?’ as we do the experiment.” Students will jot down lingering questions, discuss their

Unit Seven – Informational Writing about Science

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

hypotheses, try out the experiment you've created for them, and then jot a bit about their big ideas or conclusions. You might even teach children that even after drawing conclusions, we can be led to new questions. For instance, if my conclusion is that heavier balls roll faster than light ones, then next I might start to wonder, "What makes the heavier ball move faster down the plane?" or "What would happen if I used two balls that weigh the same but are different sizes?" You might also consider giving your students special paper, or a template for creating their own paper, on which to record the various stages of the scientific process (questions, hypothesis, observations, and conclusion).

After students have conducted this experiment they will be ready, in the following session, to teach others how to do the same by writing a how-to text. Have the experiment materials around, as many students will need to reenact the steps of the experiment and remember each step before writing their how-to text. "Wouldn't it be fun to teach the first graders how to do this experiment?" you might say. "Let's use everything we know about nonfiction writing and how-to texts to write up this experiment." Finally, in the next sessions, you'll teach children to design their own experiments from their unanswered and lingering questions. Students will now understand that if they change a variable, they can get a very different outcome. They are learning to be purposeful strategic thinkers. All of this supports the more cognitively demanding work that Webb describes in his Depth of Knowledge Levels 3 and 4. For instance, the student who wondered whether two balls of different sizes but the same weight would travel with equal speed down an inclined plane might now design an experiment to test this question. Again, children will try out the experiment, jot to explore and record their observations, and write procedural how-to texts to teach others how to conduct the same experiment.

Bend Two – Collaborating with Partners and Recording Our Experiments, While Raising the Level of Our Non-Narrative Writing

You'll begin this bend by setting up tables, much like you did at the beginning of Bend One, but this time with a far greater quantity of materials. In Bend One you focused your children on one area of forces and motion (inclined planes, say) but will now give them free reign to explore the many areas of this field. Pull out all that you have related to this area and borrow from your science teacher and science kits, as well. Planes, magnets, pulleys, springs, various weighted objects and balls—chances are, once it's all out, children will find more uses for much of this than we ever imagined!

Children enter this week with new musings and ideas to test out and experiment. As they move from teacher-initiated experiments to child-initiated experiments, you might consider allowing children to collaborate with partners or science clubs to discuss which experiments would be best to administer in the classroom, pitching their hypotheses and working together in choosing a project to pursue, aligning with the Common Core State Standards for Speaking and Listening (2.1, 2.2, 2.3). As children are deciding which experiments to pursue, help them consider some of the following questions: Do we have all the materials we need? How long will this experiment take? Do we have enough time? Which experiment will we start with? Then show children how to write proposals of experiments they wish to try, select one and get started following the inquiry process.

Students' notebooks or folders are beginning to fill with the fruits of their scientific labor. Take this opportunity to help them fine-tune and build upon what they're already doing. In this bend, one of your roles will be to help children understand that writing plays a vital role in science, helping us to question, analyze, record and teach others. In Bend One, you taught students to sketch and label, and you will probably begin by teaching them yet another form of observational writing. Show them how scientists record, in as much detail as possible, all that they observe while studying magnets or springs or pulleys or planes. They return to their sketches and this time write in words, phrases, sentences, and even paragraphs what they have seen and sketched. Teach them to use prompts like "I notice . . .", "I see . . .", "This reminds me of . . ." to elaborate on their observations. One way to ensure that children are doing this writing in as much detail as possible is to teach them to observe with categories like color, texture, shape, and size in mind. A word of caution: Some children may write assumptions rather than observations. That is, upon noticing that a heavy ball falls faster than a feather, a student might write "Heavier objects fall faster than light objects." Teach students to write the observation "The heavy ball fell faster than the feather." Teaching this reinforces that scientists observe without inferring.

Another way that scientists use notebooks is to keep track of data. So, you might teach kids to measure and record their findings or to sort and classify and record that data. This writing might take the form of charts, graphs, or time lines. Children might graph, for instance, the distance different objects travel when sent rolling down an inclined plane. Teach children that when recording data, being exact matters. Teach them to transfer what they are learning in science to the writing workshop, specifically, things like attaching units of measurement to numbers. Then too, teach them more ways to expand upon the information they observe and to formulate possible theories or hypotheses. You'll find it helpful to chart out several prompts and teach children to use them to develop and elaborate on their ideas. Among others, you'll certainly teach prompts like "I noticed . . .", "This makes me realize . . .", "I used to think . . . but, now I know . . .", and "My thinking changed because . . ."

It will be important to help children negotiate time spent "experimenting" and time spent writing. Remind students that writing is a powerful tool for thinking, and teach them new ways to record, analyze, and write about information. Draw attention to child-created record systems and encourage your young scientists to draw on all they know as they branch into this work. You might find yourself saying, "Scientists, writers, I want to show you all what Charlie has created. He developed this chart for keeping track of how long it takes each ball to roll down the plane. It's really helping him organize his data. Charlie has agreed to let us make some copies of his chart and add it to our writing center so we all can use it to record our data." Or, "Can I stop you all? Sam just came up with a great idea. He realized that the prompts we use to have ideas about our books, 'This makes me think . . .', 'I wonder . . .', and 'The idea I'm having about this is . . .' can also help us to have ideas about what we're seeing in our experiments!"

Then too, you'll teach children to question and wonder about forces and motion with pencils in hand. Because it is important that children continue to write with volume and stamina, teach them to try to hypothesize answers to their musings. You could imagine kids saying things like, "I wonder why . . .?" or "How come . . .?" Teach them to catch these thoughts by quickly jotting them in their notebooks, and then to think through possible answers (hypotheses) by using prompts such as "Maybe . . .", "Could it be . . .?", "But what about . . .?" and "The best

explanation is . . .” For example, you might show children a few observations you’ve made on the subway or while playing ball in the park. “I noticed that every time I threw a baseball to my friend, it went up and then slowly down when it got closer to her, sort of like the arc of a rainbow. Even though I was just trying to throw the ball to my friend, I couldn’t get it to go in a straight line. It always went up and then down. That got me wondering why!” At this point, you might lean in and share how this led you to develop a hypothesis. “Writers, I’ve been thinking about this and I came up with a few explanations for why this happens, a few hypotheses.” Then write these out on a chart or document camera. “My first hypothesis is that when I throw the ball up, there is something invisible pulling it down.” Continue on, developing a second conceivable explanation. “My second hypothesis is that there is something about the way I’m throwing the ball that makes it arc, that maybe if someone else threw one it would go straight across the air.”

While of course children are doing much of this work in service of their writing, they are actually employing skills rendered in the Common Core State Standards for Reading (2.1). Asking and answering questions about key details in a text will be a very similar skill that they will use while conducting their experiments. Paying close attention and thinking about key details in experiments, videos, photographs and books all help to inform a person about a topic.

Children will learn to write in these various ways throughout the unit, sometimes through minilessons, other times through teaching shares, mid-workshop teaching points, or while stopping and jotting during read-alouds. This unit is cyclical—you’ll encourage children to move through the scientific process again and again across this month, each time teaching them new ways to write, record, and polish.

Throughout this bend of the unit, children will develop and harness questions into plans for their own experiments. They will raise questions, conduct experiments to answer those questions, jot observations and draw conclusions, in the end creating many little “lab reports” that will later—in the next part of the unit—become part of a final published product. As students move through this process, remind them that science is about experimentation and that, just like writers, scientists often go back to revise and try again. Encourage partnerships to raise questions, conduct an experiment, note what worked and what didn’t and then design another, new experiment. Once they have discovered a powerful experiment, they’ll move to documenting it in a how-to text so others can replicate it.

As the young writers draft their how-to texts for their experiments, teach into the various craft moves that procedural writers use. Immerse them in the sounds of these texts by choosing a few to read aloud and study, examining how writers use their words and pictures to teach readers. Some good models of procedural books include *Nature Science Experiments: What’s Hopping in a Dust Bunny?* and the *I’m a Scientist* series from DK Publishing. You’ll also reference the procedural portions of *Move It! Motion, Forces, and You* by Adrienne Mason, *Get to Wedges* by Crabtree Publishing Company, and *Learning About the Way Things Move* by Dr. Heidi Gold-Dworkin. These will serve as mentor texts as the unit progresses and provide lots of possibilities for the ways children can write more in a procedural text.

Just as you used storytelling to help writers develop language that more closely matches the language of good storytellers, you’ll coach students to tell and retell class activities in ways that teach others, thus honing their ability to document experiments with accuracy and detail. For

Unit Seven – Informational Writing about Science

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

example, they might teach each other how to go across the monkey bars without falling, or how to make flowers out of tissue paper. As students practice retelling class activities, you can teach them how to use sequence words (e.g., first, then, next, finally) to organize their thinking and convey timing. You will also teach them how to use specific language to clarify their thinking and instructions: if a student story-tells or writes, “Get the toothpaste,” encourage her to verbalize how to get the toothpaste. If you help her to think about how she does it or actually demonstrate the action, she may decide on, “Slowly squeeze the tube to put toothpaste on the toothbrush,” instead. This oral rehearsal not only supports the Speaking and Listening standards, outlined by the Common Core (2.4, 2.6), it also provides opportunities for students to carry learning across different parts of the day, applying skills in different contexts—an expectation of the higher-level thinking described by Webb’s Depth of Knowledge.

When students act out their experiments with partners, they uncover the precise actions and language needed for readers to effectively complete a task. Teach them that in order to write procedural texts, they need to envision the steps they go through when they perform a given task. They should see it like a “movie in their minds,” and then write each step they see in their “movie”. Often, children will leave out big steps or assume their readers know more than they do. This is a great way to use writing partners. One partner can read her writing aloud while the other partner acts it out. You might give time in the middle of the workshop for partners to get together and rehearse the steps for the experiment that they are planning to write that day. Teach children how to listen to each other’s writing in order to follow the steps laid out and to see if they work. This way, writers can see the effect of their words and steps on a reader and get input that will help them revise their pieces for clarity.

In addition to teaching into the quality of the writing children are doing both in their notebook and their procedural texts, children should make use of the knowledge they’re acquiring as they read, whether through independent or club reading, or during read-aloud. Show them how to supplement their conclusions with factual information. For instance, students writing about the conclusion that smooth objects travel faster than bumpy ones down a plane might add in information they got from reading about how smooth surfaces have less friction and therefore travel at greater speeds. Then too, students will use the information they get from reading to design and imagine their own experiments. After reading about particular information in a text, children should question: “That doesn’t seem true. Let’s make an experiment and test it.”

Set partners to support this work as well, pushing each other to be stronger scientists and writers. Teach them how to compare observations and discuss what one can learn from another. For instance, “I see that you have all these little details in your picture; maybe I could make my picture more detailed,” or, “When you did that experiment you found that the rubber ball rolled faster. In my experiment the marble went faster down the plane. Maybe we should try again.” The Common Core State Standards expect that second graders “with guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing,” (W 2.5) while also participating in “collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *grade 2 topics and texts*” (SL 2.1). This work supports that.

Bend Three – Putting All Our Learning Together and Publishing Our “Lab Reports”

In this final bend, the children will compile all the information they have learned about their topics and make informational books that teach others how to conduct similar experiments. These will have an introduction, give information about the topic, describe the procedures and daily journey, and discuss their conclusions. Children may select to write up one experiment that they tried or a series of experiments that they try to help answer a question.

Begin by explaining to the children that part of being a scientist is deciding how you’ll teach the world about what you’ve discovered. Remind them of all they know from prior units, perhaps pulling out old charts and mentor texts about various kinds of procedural, expository, and narrative nonfiction writing. As a class, study these texts as well as the ones that served as mentors through this unit, helping your young scientists to imagine the final product their research will take. *Nature Science Experiments: What’s Hopping in a Dust Bunny?* and *I’m a Scientist: Kitchen* are both strong examples of how these finished products might look. Do they have several experiments they want to publish, along with excerpts from their science journals and facts to explain what their findings show? Do they want to showcase the long process of inquiry that led to one final conclusion, and therefore publish a journal of sorts that brims with all their notebook entries, musings, research, and final conclusions? These books, like other informational books, will have introductions and a section for conclusions, show the writer’s questions and their findings, and will also show others how to conduct the experiment.

You’ll especially want to refer students back to Unit Three, Informational Writing, and perhaps flip back to that unit plan yourself. Just as in November and December, you’ll most likely begin drafting the final product with a study of introductions. Show writers ways that authors of other books have written this all-important part of the book. Remind them that some writers, for example, tell the story of when they first became interested in the topic, and then what they did that kindled those sparks of interest, and what fed the interest even more. The author traces the story of her study, and does so in a way that brings readers along on that same journey. There are many other ways introductions can be organized, and you’ll want to share examples of especially well-written ones with your children. Encourage them to try many alternate drafts, much the way they try out multiple leads when drafting stories, reminding them that informational writing is as much about voice as it is about facts.

Then, of course, as with their November and December Information Writing, a writer might address the reader directly, asking questions such as, “Have you ever stopped to think about...? Every time you do... you are...” or, “Did you know that...? It is also true that...” Then, having provoked the reader’s interest, this writer might launch into an overview of the topic. That overview might well be structured in the same way that the book itself will be structured. For example, if this book teaches readers about gravity, the book might be organized in a way that follows the scientists’ series of investigations—beginning with the first, simplest attempts to understand the topic and eventually moving toward more specific experiments and nuanced findings. Or it could be organized to teach first about gravity, then about friction. Either way, the introduction might follow the structure of the book.

Much of the revision work students engage in will involve the experiments they choose to include in their final piece. Assess the work your students did writing these procedural texts and

Unit Seven – Informational Writing about Science

Reading and Writing Project, 2012 ©

DRAFT

use your findings to inform your whole-class and small-group instruction. Certainly, you'll revisit nonfiction how-to texts as a class and use these as guides for revising and adding features of nonfiction to your children's own pieces. These books are valuable models for the possible components of a "How-to." Some how-to books and manuals include a materials page. Others include cautions or warnings for the reader. Some are persuasive: "Haven't you always wanted to . . . ?" or "Did you ever wonder why . . . ?" Others end with a conclusion that brings everything together: "If your egg survives the fall, then bring it home and have your mom cook it up!" Children can learn about these kinds of additions by conducting a close reading of a text, and they can then add the features they like to their own books, such as those outlined by Level 2 of the TCRWP's *Informational Writing Continuum*, including "labeled illustrations, captions, and possibly diagrams or bold words." The Common Core State Standards for Reading Informational Text expect second grade readers to "know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently" (2.5).

Additionally, you'll want to encourage your writers to use some of the craft moves they have been working on all year. This might include adding speech bubbles or dialogue, including setting, and using descriptive details to paint a picture in a reader's mind. Children may also try using sound words, ellipses, and playing with the size of their writing and capitals to emphasize what they are saying. Be sure to refer to the charts that you have in your classroom already.

As children begin revising their pieces, have them examine their how-to texts for clarity, perhaps thinking more about how readers might perform certain steps. For example, a child who writes, "Put the ball at the top of the ramp," might ask herself, "How? You need to put the ball right in the center of the ramp so it doesn't roll off the side. And you need to hold onto it until you are ready to start the timer because otherwise it will roll down on its own." As they revise, young writers can also begin incorporating further conventions of the how-to genre, such as making their pictures teach more by eliminating extraneous details, zooming in close on the part of the picture that teaches, and using labels and arrows in their pictures. They might add warnings or advice that steer readers out of trouble: "Make sure not to push the ball down the ramp. Just let it go gently. Don't worry if you don't get it right the first time—being a scientist takes practice!" During revision, partners can also ask each other clarifying questions, like "What do you mean?" or "How do you do that?" or suggest possible tips or warnings such as, "You should write, 'Do this experiment outdoors,' because if the egg breaks it will make a big mess!"

As you move children through the process of drafting and revision, you'll certainly spend some time teaching into the art of writing conclusions, once again referring back to what they learned in the informational writing unit earlier in the year. The scientific process leads to final conclusions, and part of your job will be to help young writers craft these final ideas in ways that are both persuasive and full of voice. You may begin by teaching writers the importance of using sources to defend one's claims, and discussing the relationship between evidence and the claim. Help students know the value of specific, detailed, factual evidence that supports whatever they have said. So if a child writes, "Gravity is very strong," then that child needs to understand that he or she must defend this claim, and to do so by producing evidence, or supportive details. Help children value quotations, numbers, and specific examples. For instance, they might tell about the time they and their partner tried, in vain, to jump into the air and stay there. "No matter how

hard we tried,” a child might write, “gravity pulled our feet back down to the ground every time. We couldn’t stay in the air.” Keep in mind the standards for second grade writers, as outlined by the TCRWP’s *Informational Writing Continuum*. You’ll find that writers at Level 2 of the continuum produce text that is “developed with facts and definitions; some of the information is accompanied by the writer’s thoughts, mostly in the form of tangential asides,” drawing mainly on “personal experience and sometimes on other sources such as class work, books, and media.”

Pull out the charts from your previous informational writing unit, reminding writers that once they have produced evidence, it is important to talk about that evidence, linking it back to the claim. In this way, it is much like a partnership conversation about the evidence, only they have that conversation on the page. Scaffolds and thought prompts such as, “This is important because . . .”, “You might be surprised to learn that . . .”, “This shows that . . .”, “I used to think. . . but now I have found . . .”, “The thing I am realizing about this is . . .”, “The surprising thing about this is . . .”, and “Notice that . . .” will be immensely helpful.

Celebration

Your students have completed a shared research project, where they have not only gone through the writing process but have simultaneously been through the scientific method of research. You will want to celebrate their work in a way that honors both! Many teachers in the past have held a science fair where students set up booths with their experiments, lab reports, and findings. If you choose this option, prepare students for the event by helping them to create a small oral presentation about their writing piece, describing both the writing and scientific work they did throughout the unit. Many children may choose to have live experiments set up during the fair, as well, so they can showcase their findings for onlookers. Other students might even choose to present their work using a computer or PowerPoint. Both the Common Core State Standards for Writing and the Speaking and Listening section outline the importance of teaching and practice around the presentation of knowledge and ideas. They also both talk about incorporating technology into these presentations. What better unit for that work than this one! Teach your children how to talk to a live audience and how to present a project, referring to their documents and materials and asking questions from the visitors. Regardless of the celebration method you choose, you’ll want to coordinate something special to highlight the work of your young scientists and honor their focused efforts.